

Organizing for War in Canada, 1812-1814: The U.S. Army Experience

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article discute l'organisation, l'entraînement, et l'équipement de l'armée américaine pendant la guerre de 1812. Au début de la guerre, le Congrès a autorisé l'expansion de l'armée régulière par l'emploi de volontaires temporaires et a mobilisé la milice. Les régiments existants étaient utilisés comme cadre pour l'organisation des forces nécessaires pour la guerre. Mais le manque de personnel qualifié et la courte durée des campagnes ont fait que ces régiments étaient organisés d'une façon ad hoc en brigades et divisions qui variaient énormément en nombre de quelques centaines à plusieurs milliers. La plupart des unités avaient peu d'entraînement et étaient mal équipées, de sorte que les forces combattantes étaient largement inefficaces. Nous examinons ici les types de régiment, de brigade, et de division employés par l'armée américaine dans les campagnes contre le Haut et le Bas Canada; nous comparons l'efficacité des miliciens et des soldats réguliers; et nous évaluons l'importance des batailles dans la région de Niagara.

Organizing for War in Canada, 1812-1814: The U.S. Army Experience



by Colonel (Retired) Mark A. Olinger, U.S. Army

On 19 April 1783, eight years to the day after the first shots at Lexington, an armistice began ending the fighting in the War of American Independence; the Treaty of Paris was signed 3 September and ratified by Congress on 14 January 1784. The Treaty of Paris formally ended the war, established the United States as a member of the community of nations, and fixed its boundaries. Almost immediately Congress began disbanding the Continental Army; the soldiers of the last regiment received their discharges at West Point, New York, on 20 June 1784. Planning for a peacetime force began in the spring of 1783 and was concluded when Congress created a peace establishment authorizing a force of 700 soldiers.¹ Organized

as infantry regiments supported by field artillery or as a legionary corps, they were raised by the states for a specified term of service unless discharged sooner. Led by Continental veterans, this small peacetime Regular Army gradually expanded over time inheriting the rules, regulations, and traditions of the Continental Army.² Eventually the legislature would create a military establishment based on regular and militia forces.

When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787, they recognized the need for a more permanent military establishment to meet the identified threats to national security: civil insurrections, Indian attacks aided and abetted by the British on the frontier, and more remotely, inva-

¹ *Resolution of the Continental Congress Disbanding the Continental Army*, 2 June 1784 and *Resolution of the Continental Congress Creating the Peace Establishment*. 3 June 1784.

² *Resolution of the Continental Congress Expanding the Peace Establishment*, 20 October 1784 and *Resolution of the Continental Congress Renewing the Peace Establishment*. 3 October 1787.

Abstract

This article examines the organizing, training, and equipping of the U.S. Army during the War of 1812. When the war began, Congress raised forces by expanding the Regular Army, authorizing the use of volunteers, and calling out the militia. In organizing the required forces regimental organizations were used. The lack of trained personnel and the short duration of campaigns would result in these regiments being organized into ad hoc brigades and divisions, which varied widely in strength from as small as in the hundreds to a few thousand. Most of the units had little training and were poorly equipped, creating largely ineffective fighting forces. Against this background, the types of regiments, brigades and divisions the U.S. Army employed in the campaigns against Upper and Lower Canada, a comparison of the effectiveness of the militiamen and regulars, and the significance of the battles in the Niagara River area, will be covered.

Résumé: *Cet article discute l'organisation, l'entraînement, et l'équipement de l'armée américaine pendant la guerre de 1812. Au début de la guerre, le Congrès a autorisé l'expansion de l'armée régulière par l'emploi de volontaires temporaires et a mobilisé la milice. Les régiments existants étaient utilisés comme cadre pour l'organisation des forces nécessaires pour la guerre. Mais le manque de personnel qualifié et la courte durée des campagnes ont fait que ces régiments étaient organisés d'une façon ad hoc en brigades et divisions qui variaient énormément en nombre de quelques centaines à plusieurs milliers. La plupart des unités avaient peu d'entraînement et étaient mal équipées, de sorte que les forces combattantes étaient largement inefficaces. Nous examinons ici les types de régiment, de brigade, et de division employés par l'armée américaine dans les campagnes contre le Haut et le Bas Canada; nous comparons l'efficacité des miliciens et des soldats réguliers; et nous évaluons l'importance des batailles dans la région de Niagara.*

sion by European powers; they set about providing the means to face these possible threats.³ The Constitution allowed for a national regular army and navy and a militia under state control, but it took action to keep those forces under civilian control. Providing for congressional control of appropriations and designating

the president as commander in chief of the regular forces and of the militia when called into federal service.⁴

Congress passed the Militia Act of 1792, as amended in 1795, which were a group of statutes that authorized the President of the United States to assume command of the state militias when the

³ Robert K. Wright and Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Soldier-Statesman of the Constitution*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Center of Military History), 1987, 37.

⁴ *Constitution of the United States of America*, 17 September 1787. As ratified, the Constitution addresses military issues in five sections located in Articles I (Legislative Branch) and II (Executive Branch). Sections 6 and 7 of Article I prevent regular officers from serving in Congress while retaining their commissions and assign responsibility for initiating military revenue bills to the House of Representatives. Section 10 of the same article prohibits any state from maintaining troops or warships in peacetime without the consent of Congress, or from waging war unless that state is actually invaded or in imminent danger of invasion. Section 2 of Article II makes the President the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy and of militiamen while in federal service. The heart of the Constitution's military provisions rests in the enumerated powers given to Congress in Section 8, Article I, including the key right to "provide for the common Defense."

United States was in imminent danger of invasion from or had been invaded by any foreign nation or Indian tribe, or to suppress an insurrection in a state or states within the country. This Act required the state militias to be organized into companies, battalions, regiments, brigades, and divisions. The Act further provided that each brigade consist of four two-battalion infantry regiments. A militia division could have an artillery company and a cavalry troop, both of which were to be formed from volunteers within the brigades at the discretion of the governors. Major generals were to command divisions and brigadier generals the brigades; the only staff officer authorized was the brigade inspector, who was also to serve as the brigade major. The strength of the brigade was to be approximately 2,500 men, and it was assumed that divisional strength would vary; the statutes prescribed no set number of brigades in a division.

As implemented, the militia divisions and brigades were generally paper organizations. Congress provided neither federal supervision nor effective support for them and no provision was made for a militia force that would be available immediately to react in an emergency. Shortly after Congress passed the militia law, it authorized the use of volunteers, a third category of soldiers, for national defense. Volunteers served freely, like soldiers in the Regular Army, but they were not part of any standing or reserve force. Generally, the states raised the volunteers

that Congress considered necessary on a regimental basis, and the federal government used the volunteer regiments to form divisions and brigades.

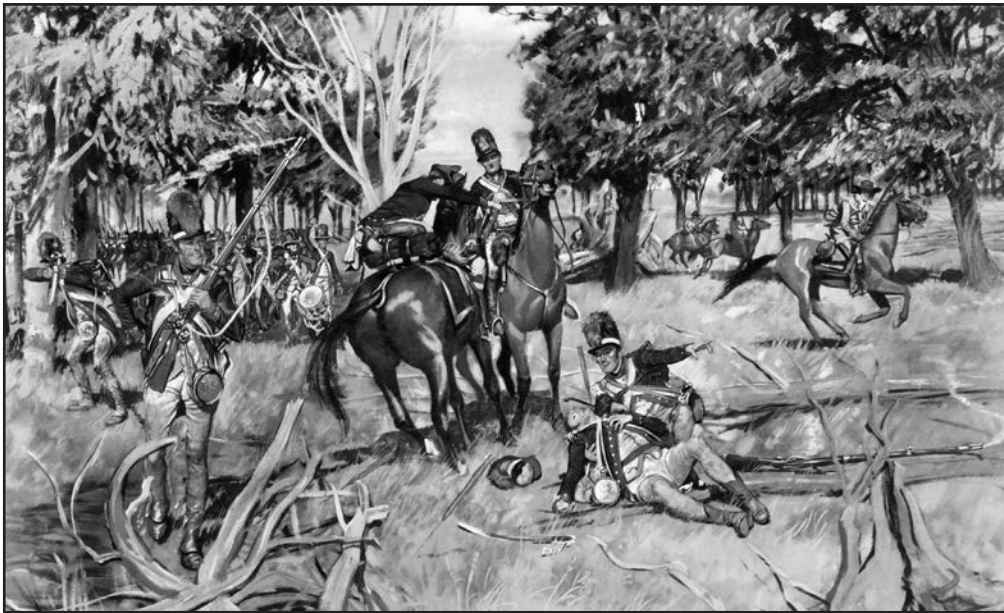
President George Washington first exercised his authority to employ the militia for suppressing insurrection and executing the laws of Congress in 1794, when he sent a large force of militia under Major General Henry Lee into western Pennsylvania during the Whiskey Rebellion. The military policies of the United States evolved realistically in response to foreign and domestic developments. There was little actual military threat to the United States from a foreign nation. Great Britain had no desire to regain control of its lost colonies, although both Great Britain and Spain sought to curb the country from expanding beyond the borders established by the treaty in 1783. Free of the threat of foreign invasion, the United States nevertheless faced a serious security problem to the west, where settlers demanded protection against the Indians as well as an equitable administration of the vast new territories obtained in 1783. The Indian problem was an old one. Under the relentless pressure of the settlers and because of the land grants made to soldiers after the Revolutionary War, the frontier was rapidly receding. The Indians fought the settlers all along the frontier. Tardily and somewhat inadequately, the U.S. government attempted to respond to these challenges.⁵ It would eventually deploy regular forces

⁵ Richard W. Stewart, *American Military History Volume 1: The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 2005), 116-20.

supported by various militia units in a series of expeditions that would last until the Indians were defeated at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 (See map on p. 25).

When President Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of War Henry Dearborn reorganized the Army by the Act of 16 March 1802, in addition to fixing the peacetime establishment they eliminated the position of quartermaster general and the Quartermaster Department. Its previous responsibilities were divided between the Secretary of War and three

civilian military agents located in the Northern, Middle, and Southern Departments, and the Army's paymasters; the military agents were confirmed by the Senate on 29 April 1802. Under this centralized system the Secretary of War became the focal point of requisitions, while supplies were dispersed through the military agents and assistants appointed as needed from among line officers. Under Dearborn, the system functioned reasonably well and in peacetime promoted economy. It did not set the



The Road to Fallen Timbers

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Reinforced by mounted militia in July 1794, Major General "Mad" Anthony Wayne led a force of about 3,000 soldiers to within a few miles of Fort Miami; a post the British had recently established on the site of what is now Toledo, Ohio. There, on 20 August 1794, almost within sight of the British guns, the Indians attacked. The Americans held their ground and then with a furious bayonet charge drove the enemy out of the cover of the fallen trees that gave the Battle of Fallen Timbers its name. In the open prairie, the Indians were at the mercy of Wayne's mounted volunteers; in less than an hour the rout was complete. The U.S. Army at this time was organized into a "legion," a term widely used during the 18th century to mean a composite organization of all combat arms under one command. The Legion of the United States, instead of being composed of regiments, was made up of four sub-legions, each commanded by a brigadier general and each consisting of two infantry battalions, one battalion of riflemen, one troop of dragoons, and one company of artillery.



conditions for large-scale offensive warfare or extended campaigns by the forces operating on multiple fronts.⁶

During the closing years of Jefferson's administration and into James Madison's the United States moved closer to another war with Great Britain. The military policy of the United States prepared the country for little more than a strategy of passive defense. On land the Jeffersonians preferred to rely upon citizen's militia springing to arms in emergencies, viewing security from foreign aggression and Indian depredations as the primary missions of its military. U.S. military leaders entered the War

of 1812 with practically no education in strategy, let alone a through acquaintance with doctrine combined with organized and trained forces capable of conducting offensive operations. When the war began, the U.S. Congress raised forces by expanding the Regular Army, authorizing the use of volunteers, and calling out the militia. In organizing the forces required both the federal and state governments used regimental organizations to form the brigades and divisions to be employed throughout the war. The events of war soon proved the U.S. Army was not prepared for any type of offensive operations.

⁶ Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p.78.

Background to War

The second war with England almost began when the British warship *Leopard* attacked the American *Chesapeake* in 1807. This aggression caused the U.S. Congress to add five Regular infantry regiments in 1808, the 3rd through the 7th, one regiment of light dragoons, one regiment of light artillery, and also to constitute the Regiment of Riflemen. The light dragoon regiment of eight companies constituted the only cavalry in the Regular Army until 1812, when a second regiment was authorized. These two regiments were the designated cavalry force of the Regular Army during the War of 1812, and at no time were they at full-authorized strength. The Regiment of Riflemen was a product of the Revolutionary War experience and the first rifle unit since the end of the Legion of the United States in 1796.⁷

Aside from the augmentation of 1808 there was no further preparation for war until just six months before war with England was declared. The increasing threat of war with Great Britain prompted Congress to authorize the expansion of the Regular Army in January 1812. On 11 January 1812, Congress authorized an additional ten infantry regiments, one of dragoons, and two artillery regiments, bringing the total number of

regiments up to seventeen of infantry, one of riflemen, two of dragoons, three of artillery, and one of light artillery.⁸ The Act which created them was remarkable in at least three ways: first, it provided for the largest regiments and battalions authorized in the United States before the Civil War, second, it established an infantry organization that was at variance with the seven existing regiments, and third, it added artillery and dragoon regiments, which were expensive and not usually necessary on the frontier.

As a result, in the first six months of 1812 there were three different-sized infantry regiments, besides one of riflemen. The 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiments made the military peace establishment, and had ten companies with 76 enlisted men. The 3rd through the 7th Infantry Regiments, authorized in 1808, were designated the additional force, and comprised ten companies with two more officers and two more enlisted men each than the 1st and 2nd had. Finally, the 8th through the 17th Infantry Regiments in no way resembled the other regiments; they had eighteen companies of 110 enlisted men, organized into two battalions.⁹

Although some of the eighteen company regiments were raised, several never acquired their second battalions. Recruiting was so difficult that they lacked

⁷ John K. Mahon and Ramona Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), 13 and Mary Lee Stubbs and Stanley Russel Conner, *Armor-Cavalry Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1969), 7.

⁸ Janice E. McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 2007), 25.

⁹ Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army*, 13 and 14.

the time to raise many before Congress voted for another reorganization of the infantry. Late in June 1812, the legislators changed the law and there were to be 25 regiments of infantry, exclusive of the rifle regiment, each containing ten companies of 102 men. This made all of the infantry regiments uniform on paper, and a standard of organization was established that persisted throughout the war. Once constituted, all 25 infantry regiments organized and recruited actively, but during the first two years of the war their efforts brought in less than half of the total number of infantrymen authorized.¹⁰ For artillery the Regiment of Artillerists, was re-designated as the 1st Regiment of Artillery, and the Regiment of Light Artillery. The twenty companies in each of the new regiments were divided into two battalions rather than five, and each company had fourteen more soldiers than did the 1st Regiment.¹¹

Among the significant causes of the war were the continuing clash over territorial expansion and respect by Great Britain of U.S. neutral rights at sea, the issue upon which President James Madison dwelt in his war message. Madison's war message cited numerous grievances against Great Britain including impressment, the practice of inspecting U.S. flagged ships in American territorial waters, trade embargoes detrimental to the

U.S. economy, and finally, the alleged incitement to violence of the First Nations by the British Army.¹² After an ideological rift in the House and spirited debate in the Senate, Congress declared a state of war between Great Britain and the United States on 18 June 1812, that stated:

That war be, and the same is hereby, declared to exist between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the dependencies thereof, and the United States of America and their Territories; and that the President of the United States is hereby authorized to use the whole land and naval force of the United States to carry the same into effect, and to issue to private armed vessels of the United States, commissions, or letters of marque and general reprisal, in such form as he shall think proper, under the seal of the United States, against the vessels, goods, and effects of the government of the said United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the subjects thereof.¹³

The authorized strength of the Army at the time was, on paper, respectable. In reality, approximately half of the units had been legislated into being less than six months before, and none were at full strength. In July, the entire Army numbered only 6,744 soldiers. Voting regiments into existence was one thing, enlisting them another. What is more, the units that were raised were virtually untrained, and unprepared for the war on which they embarked.¹⁴

The desire of frontier expansionists

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, 25.

¹² Russell F. Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 46 and 47.

¹³ *An Act declaring war between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the dependencies thereof, and the United States of America and their Territories*, 18 June 1812.

¹⁴ Theodore J. Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," in Charles E. Heller

to attack Canada while Great Britain was preoccupied with the Napoleonic Wars became an offensive goal. When Americans interpreted their purposes less modestly, they saw themselves as going to war for the outright conquest of Canada. Regardless of the motivation the conquest of Canada was the logical objective given the size and capabilities of the Regular Army, volunteer force, and the militia. The Regular Army was authorized almost 36,000 soldiers, the volunteer force 50,000 and a militia contingent of 100,000 drawn from 700,000 listed on the rolls. Additionally, the Army was now supplied with officers from its own military academy.¹⁵ The goal of just attacking Canada enough to win concessions from Great Britain might have been attainable despite the lack of an offensive military capability by the United States in its Army. Canada, like the United States, was largely undeveloped with scattered settlements near the rivers and lakes that divided the two nations. The principal fighting strength on both sides during the war lay in the infantry, with most of the artillerymen manning various ordnance pieces wherever they may be posted; when required artillerymen fought as infantry.¹⁶

Early Phases of the War

At the outbreak of the war, the United States had series of border forts

garrisoned by small Regular Army detachments stretched along the Canadian boundary: Fort Mackinac, on the straits between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron; Fort Dearborn, on the site of what is now Chicago; Fort Detroit; and Fort Niagara, at the mouth of the Niagara River on Lake Ontario. An estimated 7,000 British and Canadian regulars guarded the 900 miles of Canadian frontier and they could not be reinforced by Great Britain at the start of the war because of its struggle against France, and the American war was viewed as a sideshow. Potentially, U.S. militia reinforcements with the small U.S. Regular Army as a spearhead might outnumber and overwhelm the British and Canadians. Unfortunately, it was never formulated before the war how the Army would conduct offensive operations, as it was now required to execute, perhaps because the Jeffersonians were too deeply wedded to a defensive framework in the use of military power. Consequently, the political leadership never informed the War Department what they were supposed to be preparing for and later execute.¹⁷

There was no strategy for the war beyond the general agreement in the U.S. government and War Department that Canada be attacked. The obvious line of attack against Canada would have been the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River route to Montreal. This would require

and William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 33 and 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶ McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, 26 and 27.

¹⁷ Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 47.

the United States to concentrate its forces around Albany and then push forward to get astride the St. Lawrence at Montreal. If successful everything in Canada to the west would be deprived support from across the Atlantic and the more populous of the Canadian provinces. The U.S. failed to adopt this strategic approach and, upon the outbreak of the war, U.S. military activity was not toward Montreal but at the western end of the Canadian frontier. The enthusiasm of the western United States in support of the war helped produce this strategic incongruity.¹⁸

Taking Montreal or even Kingston in 1812 would have assured the United States control and cut communications with the posts to the west, which would have fallen of their own accord. President Madison had favored such an approach, but difficulties prevented the necessary concentration of effort on a single objective. To take Montreal quickly, it was essential to employ the militias from New England, supposedly the best prepared in the country. When the president called for militia, Massachusetts Governor Caleb Strong replied that he, rather than the president, had the power to decide when constitutional exigencies actually existed. Not expecting any invasions, he refused the request except for three companies that were sent to the Canadian border. Connecticut took a similar view and furnished no forces. The governors of New York, Pennsylvania, and other states generally complied with the

requests placed on them to call out the militia. Without militia forces from New England, it was proposed that a move against Montreal could only be accomplished after preliminary offensives from Detroit, Niagara, and Sackett's Harbor. The expectation was that these secondary efforts, which could use available local militia, would siphon off British forces that could otherwise have been moved to defend Montreal.¹⁹

In the initial phases of the war along the border in 1812 the United States suffered a series of reverses, beginning when Major General William Hull attempted to invade Canada from Detroit. William Hull, governor of the Michigan Territory, was directed to conduct offensive operations from Detroit and assumed command of his forces at Fort Detroit on 5 July 1812, with a force of about 1,500 Ohio militiamen organized into three regiments of volunteers and 300 regulars organized into an infantry regiment. He led them across the river into Canada a week later. At that time the whole enemy force on the Detroit frontier amounted to about 150 British regulars, 300 Canadian militiamen, and some 250 Indians led by Tecumseh. Most of the enemy forces were at Fort Malden, about 20 miles south of Detroit, on the Canadian side of the river.²⁰ Hull sent out several small raiding detachments along the Thames and Detroit Rivers, one of which returned after skirmishing with the British outposts near Fort Malden. Meanwhile,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47 and 48.

¹⁹ Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 42 and 43.

²⁰ Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, pp.80 - 82.

a small party of British regulars, Canadians, and Indians, under Major General Sir Isaac Brock, moved to threaten Hull's tenuous line of communication along the shores of Lake Erie. Hull, discouraged by the loss of Fort Mackinac, whose 60 defenders had quietly surrendered on 17 July to a small group of British regulars, fur traders and Indians, began to withdraw his force across the river into Fort Detroit on 7 August. The last American had scarcely returned before the first of Brock's force appeared and began setting up artillery opposite Detroit. By 15 August five guns were in position and opened fire on the fort. The Americans responded with fire from 24-pounders. During the night Brock led his troops across the river. Before an assault could be launched, the Americans surrendered. The regulars were sent to Lower Canada as prisoners, but the militiamen were released to return home on parole.²¹

Acting on orders from Hull, the day before the surrender, the small garrison at Fort Dearborn, had evacuated the post and started out for Detroit. The column was almost instantly attacked by a band of Indians who massacred the Americans before returning to destroy the fort. Later paroled, Hull returned to the United States to face a court-martial for his poor conduct during the campaign, was sentenced to be shot, and was immediately

pardoned.²² With the fall of Mackinac, Detroit, and Dearborn, the entire territory north and west of Ohio fell under enemy control. The settlements in Indiana lay open to attack and the neighbouring Indian tribes hastened to join the winning side.

Immediately after taking Detroit, Brock transferred most of his forces to the Niagara frontier, where he faced a U.S. invasion force of 6,500 men. New York militiaman Major General Stephen van Rensselaer, the senior American commander, was in the vicinity of Lewiston with a force of 900 regulars and about 2,300 militiamen. Inexperienced he at least fought the enemy, which was more than could be said of the Regular Army Brigadier General Alexander Smyth. Smyth and his 1,650 regulars and nearly 400 militiamen were located at Buffalo. Lastly, about 1,300 regulars were stationed at Fort Niagara. U.S. attempts to invade Canada across the Niagara in October and toward Montreal a month later failed completely.²³

Van Rensselaer planned to cross the narrow Niagara River and capture Queenston and its heights, an escarpment that ran perpendicular to the river south of the town. From this vantage point, he intended to drive the British out of the Niagara peninsula. Smyth, on the other hand, wanted to attack above

²¹ Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 43 and A.J. Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 182-88 and 190-94.

²² Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 43; Langguth, *Union 1812*, 273, and Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, p.84.

²³ Ronald J. Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, (Toronto: James Lormier and Company, Ltd., 2001), 27-29 and Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 87.

the falls, where the banks were low and the current less swift; and he refused to cooperate with the militia general. With a force ten times that of the British opposite him, van Rensselaer decided to attack alone the morning of October 13. The assault force numbered 600 men, roughly half of them New York militiamen, but the attack did not go well. Several boats drifted beyond the landing area, and the first troops to land, numbering far fewer than 500, were pinned down for a time on the riverbank below the heights. The men eventually found an unguarded path, clambered to the summit and, surprising the enemy, overwhelmed the fortified battery and drove them into Queenston.²⁴

Later in the morning the Americans repelled a counterattack, during which Brock was killed. This was the high point of the battle. Although 1,300 men were successfully ferried across the river under persistent British fire from a fortified battery north of town, less than half of them ever reached the U.S. line on the heights. Most of the militiamen refused to cross the river, insisting on their legal right to remain on U.S. soil; and Smyth ignored van Rensselaer's request for regulars. Meanwhile, British and Canadian reinforcements arrived in Queenston, and Major General Roger Sheave, Brock's successor, began to advance on the U.S. position with a force of 800 troops and 300 Indian skirmishers. Van Rensselaer's

soldiers, tired and outnumbered, put up a stiff resistance on the heights but in the end were defeated, with 300 Americans killed or wounded and nearly 1,000 captured. Except for minor raids across the frozen St. Lawrence, there was no further fighting along the New York frontier until the following spring.²⁵

During the Niagara campaign the largest force then under arms, commanded by Major General Henry Dearborn, was in the vicinity of Albany, more than 250 miles from the scene of operations. Dearborn had served as Jefferson's Secretary of War. Persuaded to accept command of the northern theater, except for Hull's forces, he was in doubt about the extent of his authority. When it was clarified, he was reluctant to exercise it; proposing to move his forces, which included seven regiments of regulars with artillery and dragoons, against Montreal in conjunction with a simultaneous operation across the Niagara River. At the beginning of November he sent a large force north to Plattsburg and announced that he would personally lead it into Montreal, but most of his force got no farther than the border. When his advance guard was driven back to the village of Champlain by Canadian militiamen and Indians, his Vermont and New York volunteers flatly refused to cross the border, Dearborn quietly turned around and marched back to Plattsburg, where he went into winter quarters.²⁶

²⁴ Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 29 and 30; Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 87; and Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 45-48.

²⁵ *Op cit*, 31-38 and Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 48.

²⁶ *Op cit*, 48 and Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 88.

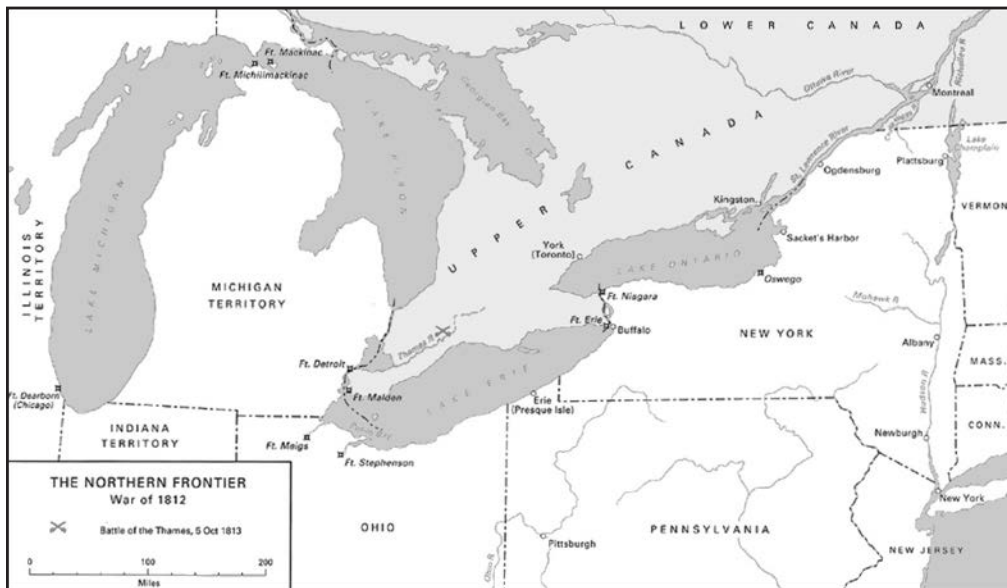
Before 1812 was over, Canada was cleared of U.S. invasion forces, and the whole Northwest Territory beyond the Ohio River was in danger of collapsing under British counterattacks. This disastrous experience still failed to instruct the U.S. leadership that they should observe the strategic principle of directing their offensive efforts upon vital and vulnerable objectives, in this instance the St. Lawrence bottleneck into the Canadian interior. In the course of the war U.S. military and political leaders never recognized this strategic principle and concentrated their limited offensive efforts in operations along the western Canadian frontier.²⁷

Second Year: 1813

The objects of the U.S. campaign plan for 1813 were the recapture of

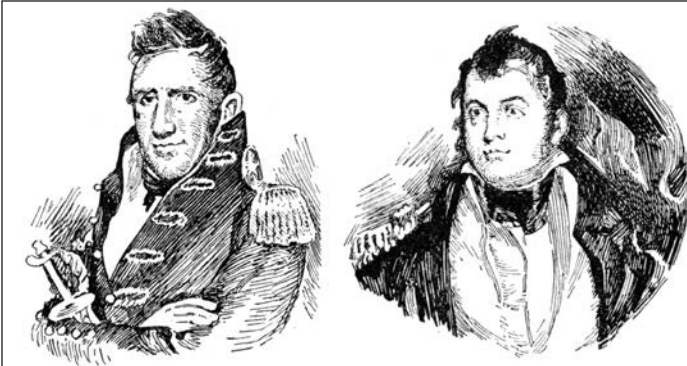
Detroit and an attack on Canada across Lake Ontario. For the Detroit campaign, Madison picked Brigadier General William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indian Territory and hero of Tippecanoe. The difficulties of a winter campaign were tremendous, but the country demanded action. Harrison's move to recapture Detroit was repulsed in January 1813, but he checked British efforts to penetrate deeper into the region at the west end of Lake Erie during the summer of 1813.²⁸ What can be said about the U.S. strategy along the border is that by 1813 they had determined that to save their Northwest Territory and regain the initiative, they must capture naval control of Lakes Ontario and Erie. (See map below)

In the race to build warships, the U.S. had a slight logistical advantage in that it was easier for them to build and



²⁷ Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 48

²⁸ Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*, 238-44.



Left-right: Gen. William Henry Harrison and Captain Oliver Hazard Perry as drawn by C.W. Jeffreys from an engraving after Wood that appeared in Analytic Magazine and a portrait by Jarvis in the city hall of New York. Pictorial History of Canada, vol. 2 (Copp Clark: Toronto, 1963), 126.

equip warships than the British who had to transport key equipment and supplies from across the Atlantic. It would require the uncommon leadership and initiative from U.S. Navy Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry in building his squadron on Lake Erie. On Lake Ontario, U.S. Navy Commodore Isaac Chauncey managed to build a squadron that at least matched and sometimes surpassed the Royal Navy squadron; but it never achieved more than a stalemate.²⁹

The Ontario campaign was entrusted to Dearborn, who was ordered to move his forces from Plattsburg to Sacket's Harbor, where Chauncey had been assembling a squadron. Dearborn was to move across the lake to capture Kingston and destroy the British flotilla there, then proceed to York, the capital of Upper Canada, to capture military stores. Finally, he was to cooperate with a force from Buffalo in seizing the forts on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. The U.S. strategy was basically sound for the capture of Kingston, the only tenable site for a naval station on the Canadian side

of Lake Ontario, would give the United States control of the lake and, by cutting the British lines of communications, frustrate enemy plans for operations in the west. When the time came to move, Dearborn and Chauncey, hearing a rumor that the British forces in Kingston had been reinforced, decided to bypass that objective and attack York first. About 1,700 men sailed up Lake Ontario without incident, arriving off York before daybreak on 27 April. Dearborn, who was in poor health, turned over the command of the assault to the explorer Brigadier General Zebulon Pike. The landing, about four miles west of the town, was virtually unopposed. Occupying a fortification about halfway between the town and the landing was the British garrison of 600 men, which was overwhelmed after sharp resistance. Just as the Americans were pushing through the fort toward the town, a powder magazine exploded killing or disabling a number of Americans and British soldiers; Pike was among those killed. The losses were heavy on both sides and the remnants of the garrison fled toward Kingston, 150 miles to the east. With Dearborn incapacitated

²⁹ Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 49.

tated and Pike dead, the U.S. soldiers began looting and burning the public buildings, destroying the provincial records. After holding the town for about a week, they crossed the lake to Niagara to join an attack against the forts on the Canadian side of the Niagara River.³⁰

Meanwhile, Sacket's Harbor was defended by about 400 regulars and approximately 750 militiamen under the command of New York militiaman Brigadier General Jacob Brown. Brown posted his men in two lines in front of a fortified battery to cover a possible landing. At Kingston, Sir George Prevost, the Governor General of Canada, had assembled a force of over 800 British regulars and militiamen with two 6-pounder guns. Taking advantage of the absence of Chauncey's fleet, Prevost launched an attack on Sacket's Harbor with his entire force on the night of 26 May. Coming ashore under heavy fire, the British pressed rapidly forward, routed the first line, and pushed the second back into the prepared defenses, where the Americans held. The British then attempted two frontal assaults but were repulsed with heavy losses. While they were re-forming for a third attack, Brown rallied the militia and sent it toward the rear of the enemy's right flank.



Gen. Jacob Brown, by C.W. Jeffreys, from a portrait by J.W. Jarvis, city hall, New York.

This was the turning point. Having suffered serious losses and in danger of being cut off, the British withdrew to their ships.³¹

On the same day Prevost sailed against Sacket's Harbor, Dearborn, at the western end of Lake Ontario, was invading Canada with a force of 4,000 soldiers. The operation began with a well-executed amphibious assault led by Colonel Winfield Scott with the U.S. Navy providing fire support. Outnumbered by more than two to one, the British retreated, abandoning Fort George and Queenston to the Americans. An immediate pursuit might have sealed the victory, but Dearborn, after occupying Fort George, waited several days and then sent about 2,000 men after the enemy, advancing to within ten miles of the British. With slight regard for security and even less for the enemy's audacity it halted for the night. During the night a force of about 700 British soldiers attacked the camp and routed the Americans. Dearborn then withdrew his entire force to Fort George. Two weeks later, a 500-man detachment ventured 15 miles outside the fort and, when attacked, surrendered to a force of British and Indians that was half as large. After these reverses there was no further action

³⁰ Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 41-44 and Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*, 230-35.

³¹ J. Mackay Hitsman and Donald E. Graves, *The Incredible War of 1812*, (Toronto: Robin Bass Studio, 1999), 142-48 and Patrick A. Wilder, *The Battle of Sacket's Harbor*, (Baltimore, MD: The Nautical & Aviation Company of America, 1994), 119-22.



Remember the River Raisin! by Ken Riley (NATIONAL GUARD BUERAU)

Following Commodore Perry's success at Lake Erie, a U.S. ground force engaged British forces 75 miles east of Detroit on 5 October 1813. The Battle of the Thames was revenge for an earlier massacre of Kentucky militia on the River Raisin. Coupled with Perry's triumph, it ended a series of defeats and helped restore U.S. dominance in the northwest region.

of consequence on the Niagara front for the remainder of the year. Dearborn, again incapacitated by illness, resigned his commission in early July.³²

On 10 September 1813 Perry's squadron defeated the Royal Navy fleet on Lake Erie, restoring U.S. dominance in the Northwest Territory beyond the Ohio.³³ Further it set the conditions for Harrison's victory in western Canada at the Thames River on 5 October, which reestablished U.S. control over the Detroit area. As soon as the damage to Per-

ry's ships and the captured British vessels had been repaired, Harrison embarked his forces and sailed against Fort Malden. A regiment of mounted Kentucky riflemen under Colonel Richard M. Johnson moved along the shore of the lake toward Detroit. Outnumbered and now open to attack from the water, the British abandoned both Forts Malden and Detroit and retreated eastward. Leaving a detachment to garrison the forts, Harrison set out after the enemy with the Kentucky cavalry regiments, five bri-

³² Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 44-47.

³³ Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 49.

gades of Kentucky volunteers, and a part of the U.S. 27th Infantry, a force of about 3,500 men. On 5 October he made contact with the British on the banks of the Thames River about 85 miles from Malden. The enemy numbered about 2,900, of whom about 900 were British regulars and the remainder Indians under Tecumseh. Instead of attacking with infantry in the traditional line-against-line fashion, Harrison ordered a mounted attack. The maneuver succeeded completely. Unable to withstand the charging Kentuckians, the British surrendered in droves. The Indians were routed; Tecumseh, who had brought so much trouble to the western frontier, was killed. Harrison, after discharging his Kentucky volunteers and arranging for the defenses of the Michigan Territory, sailed after the escaping British forces that numbered no more than 250.³⁴

This decisive victory illustrated successful employment of the principles of offensive and mass while highlighting the importance of combined land-sea operations, resulting in Lake Erie becoming an American lake. The Indian confederacy was shattered and the U.S. position on the Detroit frontier was reestablished, a portion of Canadian territory was brought under U.S. control, and the en-

emy threat in that sector was eliminated. There was no further fighting here for the rest of the war.

For the U.S. the expedition against Montreal in the fall of 1813 was one of the worst disasters of the war. It involved a simultaneous drive by two forces: one, of about 4,000 soldiers assembled at Plattsburg on Lake Champlain under the command of Brigadier General Wade Hampton, and another of about 6,000 men under the command of Major General James Wilkinson, which was to attack down the St. Lawrence River from Sacket's Harbor. Hampton and Wilkinson were scarcely on speak-



Gen. James Wilkinson, by C.W. Jeffreys from a portrait by C.W. Peale in Independence Hall, Philadelphia.

ing terms, and there was no one on the ground to command the two of them. Neither had sufficient strength to capture Montreal without the other's aid; each lacked confidence in the other, and both suspected that the War Department was leaving them in the lurch. At first contact with the British, about halfway down the Chateaugay River, Hampton retreated and, after falling back all the way to Plattsburg, resigned from the Army. Wilkinson, after a detachment of about 2,000 men was severely mauled in an engagement just north of Ogdensburg, also abandoned his part of the operation and followed Hampton into Plattsburg.³⁵

³⁴ Stubbs and Conner, *Armor-Cavalry Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve*, 7, Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*, 2006, 261-70 and Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 53 and 54.

³⁵ Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 54-59.

In the meantime, during December 1813 the British took advantage of the weakened state of U.S. forces on the Niagara frontier. They recaptured Fort George and crossed the river to take Fort Niagara, which remained in British hands until the end of the war. Before evacuating Fort George, the Americans had burned the town of Newark and part of Queenston. In retaliation the British, after assaulting Fort Niagara with unusual ferocity, let loose their Indian allies on the surrounding countryside and burned the town of Buffalo.³⁶

Reorganizing the Army

During the early phases of the war, the Army was plagued by mismanagement in the War Department, incompetent generals, and militiamen who refused to serve outside the boundaries of the United States. In early 1813 Madison replaced his incompetent Secretary of War William Eustis with John Armstrong, who instituted a reorganization that eventually resulted in the substitution of younger, more aggressive field commanders for the aged veterans of the Revolution. Congress then authorized an expansion of the U.S. Army staff to help the secretary manage the war. In March it re-created the Offices of the Adjutant General, Inspector General, Surgeon, and Apothecary General and assigned eight topographical engineers to the staff. By 1814, the Army largely re-deemed itself through improved recruit-

ing, reorganization, and competent new commanders.

In the midst of the war Congress acted to rationalize the regimental recruiting and force structure. Regulars at first could only enlist for five years, but late in 1812 new recruits were given an opportunity to enlist for the duration of the war. All the while the states competed with the Regular Army for soldiers and the shorter terms of service they offered drew men to enlist into their units. A bounty of sixteen dollars was offered to stimulate enlistments; a bonus of three months' pay and 160 acres of land was added for those who completed their service faithfully.³⁷ Congress directed the creation, in January 1813, of twenty new infantry regiments to be enlisted for one year of service. Nineteen of them were raised and designated as the 26th through the 44th Infantry Regiments; later, they were converted into standard infantry regiments. The reality was that all of the units constituted after 1811 had soldiers in them who had enlisted for different terms. For example, there were in a single regiment one-year regulars, eighteen month men, three- and five-year men, and some in for the duration of the war.³⁸ During the first two of the years, they attracted less than the total number authorized.

The lack of trained personnel and the short duration of campaigns would result in these regiments being organized into ad hoc brigades and divisions, which varied widely in strength from as small

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁷ Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 34.

³⁸ Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army*, 14.

as hundreds to a few thousand. Brigadier General Joseph Bloomfield's New York militia brigade assigned to Major General Henry Dearborn's force in 1813 counted 1,400 strong; Brigadier General Winfield Scott's Regular brigade in 1814 before the Battle of Chippewa fielded 1,300 men; and the Pennsylvania volunteer brigade that crossed the border into Upper Canada in 1814 numbered 413. The strength of the divisions fluctuated just as much. In 1812 the New York quota for militia men was 13,500, which the state organized into two divisions of four brigades each. At the same time, with a quota of 2,500 men, Tennessee organized a division of two infantry regiments plus a non-divisional cavalry regiment.³⁹

During the war U.S. Army leaders discussed the organization of brigades and divisions, and they sometimes disagreed with the contemporary practice or with the laws then in effect. *The Register of the Army* published in 1813 stated that a brigade would consist of two regiments and a division of two brigades with but a single staff officer, the brigade major, in each. The laws in force, however, authorized a brigade staff of an inspector, sub-inspector, quartermaster, wagon master, and chaplain. When a brigadier general commanded a brigade, his brigade major and aides were included in the staff. Major generals continued to command divisions, and their staffs consisted of a quartermaster, judge advocate, and two aides. The official handbook for infantry

compiled by William Duane, the Adjutant General, in 1813 called for a brigade in the peace establishment to consist of any number of battalions, but for field service it was not to exceed 4,000 men. A division could have from two to four brigades. During congressional deliberations as to the number of general officers needed to conduct the war, Secretary of War John Armstrong expressed that a brigade should have only two regiments because the management of 2,000 men in the field was ample duty for a brigadier general. Also, in his opinion, the direction of 4,000 men was a suitable command for a major general.⁴⁰

Few artillerymen were capable of employing artillery in a battlefield environment. Fewer yet understood the value of their arm, and infantry commanders had even less knowledge of artillery tactics. The infantry battle lines usually formed just beyond the effective range of artillery, about 500 yards, and artillery was limited to repelling the opposing force's attack. There was little possibility of salvaging the situation, for the Army had no senior artillery officers to direct any emphasis towards the arm. During the war, a few companies of the 1st and 2nd Regiments served as true field artillery and were occasionally effective, as were the 12-pounder batteries at the Battle of Chippewa. Light artillery was a new institution in the United States, and the officers and men lacked peacetime, much less wartime, experience. The Regiment

³⁹ John B. Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1998), 7 and 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 9 and Crackel, "The Battle of Queenston Heights, 13 October 1812," 51 and 52.

Gen. Winfield Scott by C.W. Jeffreys based on an engraving after Wood as first appeared in Analectic Magazine, 1814.

of Light Artillery had been dismantled in 1809 and the War Department intended to mount the regiment, but within six months of the declaration of war, only half the companies were equipped as such. Because the terrain did not favor massed cavalry, many viewed horse artillery as unnecessary. The regiment seldom operated as light artillery and when it did it was by small detachments. By the end of the war, most of the companies in the regiment had been reequipped as infantry. The 3rd Artillery Regiment served primarily as infantry on the New York – Canadian frontier, with some companies performing as foot artillery along the Atlantic coast.⁴¹

While organizing brigades and divisions in 1813, the question arose as to whether or not Regular Army and militia units should be “brigaded” together. Because the drill and discipline of the regulars differed greatly from that of the militia, with each state prescribing its own drill, the general practice was to brigade each category of troops separately. Raising and maintaining troops during the War of 1812 proved to be difficult because of the opposition to the war. Most of the units assigned to them had little training and were poorly equipped, creating largely ineffective fighting forces. One notable exception was Scott’s Regular Army brigade, consisting of



the 9th, 11th, 22nd, and 25th Infantry Regiments, near Buffalo, New York. A student of European military training, Scott in the spring of 1814 trained his brigade into a disciplined force that took the British by surprise when deployed to block a British advance into New York.⁴²

In 1814 Congress would enact legislation to improve the structure of the Army. Early in 1814 four more infantry regiments and three more regiments of riflemen were constituted. In the end 48 infantry regiments, numbered from the 1st to the 48th, were constituted, plus four rifle regiments, the 1st through the 4th. This was the greatest number of infantry units included in the Regular Army until the world wars of the twentieth century. Further an effort was made to raise the Army to strength, and nearly

⁴¹ McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, 27.

⁴² Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades*, 8.

27,000 men were recruited but in spite of this, four of the regiments had to be consolidated because they were too small. The 17th, 19th, 26th, and 27th were joined to form a new 17th and a new 19th, while the two highest numbered, the 47th and 48th, were re-designated the 27th and 26th, respectively.⁴³ Consolidated into an eight troop command designated the Regiment of Light Dragoons were the two dragoon regiments. Although the consolidated regiment seldom operated as a single unit and a year later was disbanded, detachments saw action at Lundy's Lane, Fort Erie, and Bladensburg.⁴⁴

Congress reorganized the three artillery regiments under the Act of 30 March when it accepted the recommendation of Secretary of War John Armstrong to consolidate the three regiments into battalions, under the title Artillery of the United States. The law provided for the three regiments to be organized into twelve battalions with 48 companies. Strength of the artillery companies was increased by the addition of thirty-four enlisted men and two lieutenants, one of which was to be responsible for ordnance equipment and supplies. Under this reorganization each company was to maneuver either four guns of the same caliber and two howitzers or six guns of not more than two calibers. A company of artillery was organized of two half divisions, each consisting of two guns of the same caliber and one howitzer or three guns of the

same caliber. One ammunition wagon or caisson was allotted to each pair of 3-pounders, one to each 6-pounder, two to each howitzer, two or at most three, were allotted to each gun larger than a 6-pounder. Three wagons were authorized for equipment and stores for each company and one for each half section. A traveling forge was authorized for each company of light artillery and for every two companies of foot artillery.⁴⁵

Competent leadership, organization, and training meant little without sufficient logistical support; logistics, more than any other factor, determined the nature of the military campaigns of the war. With the regular army geographically dispersed across the United States and on the frontier in posts seldom greater than company strength, there had been little to no opportunity to exercise the sustainment of regimental let alone division size formations. The logistics system in use at the start of the war proved a resounding failure, because peacetime economy was achieved at the expense of military effectiveness. The United States was fighting a war on widely separated fronts that required moving supplies through a wilderness where roads had to be built for wagons and packhorses. While transportation was a major challenge, it accounted for only part of the problem. Supply of ammunition, clothing, medical and subsistence supplies proved inadequate. Winter months found the soldiers without blankets, inadequately housed, and

⁴³ Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army*, 14.

⁴⁴ Stubbs and Conner, *Armor-Cavalry Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve*, 7.

⁴⁵ McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, 26 and 27.

without forage for their horses.

In a vain attempt to improve the sustainment of the Army forces conducting combat operations, Congress authorized additions to the War Department staff that included the Ordnance, Purchasing, and Quartermaster Departments. Congress did not reinstate the Commissary and Hospital Departments. The Ordnance Department oversaw the reception, storing, maintaining, and repair of munitions. Arms, ammunition, clothing, accoutrements, and equipment were provided by the Purchasing Department. The Quartermaster Department was responsible for purchasing military stores not procured by the Purchasing and Ordnance Departments, except for ration which contractors provided and transported. To add flexibility to the system, in an emergency, a commanding officer could authorize his quartermaster to purchase needed supplies locally.⁴⁶ Throughout the war Congress and the War Department overlooked the greatest need for reform allowing the Army to rely on contractors for the sustainment of its forces. With no centralized direction, the inefficient, fraud-racked contract system proved to be one of the gravest hindrances to military operations throughout the war.⁴⁷

Final Campaigns in Canada

British control of Lake Ontario, obliged the Secretary of War to rec-

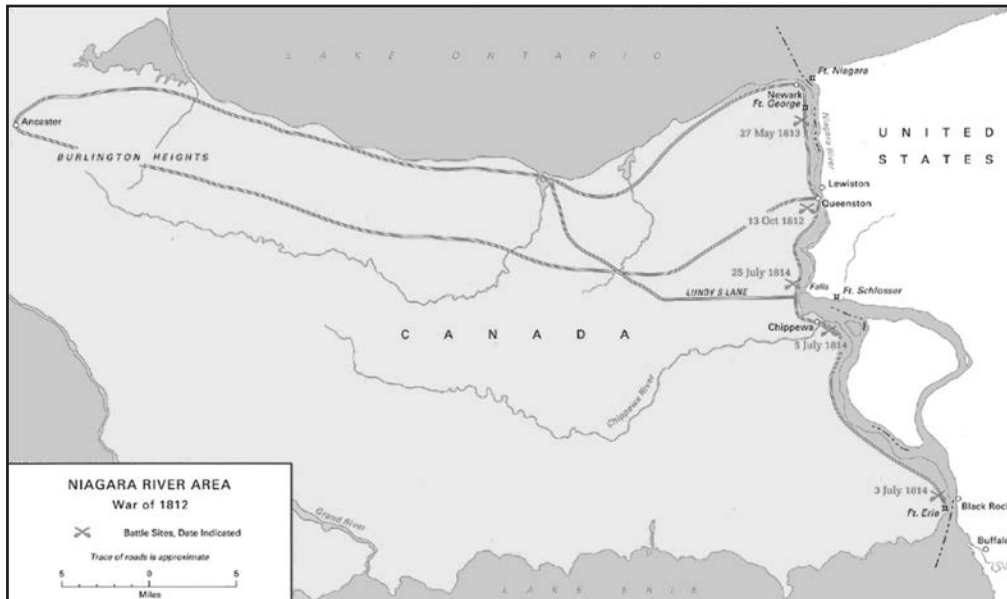
ommend operations from Buffalo, but disagreement within the president's cabinet delayed adoption of a plan. A U.S. advance from Plattsburg in March 1814, led by Major General James Wilkinson, was checked just beyond the border. Expecting Commodore Chauncey's naval squadron to be strong enough to challenge the Royal Navy, Washington decided upon a coordinated attack on the Niagara peninsula. (See map, p. 42) Secretary Armstrong instructed Brown to cross the Niagara River in the vicinity of Fort Erie and, after assaulting the fort, either to move against Fort George and Newark or to seize and hold a bridge over the Chippewa River, as he saw fit. On 3 July 3,500 men under Brown crossed the Niagara River seizing Fort Erie in a coordinated attack with Chauncey's squadron and then advanced toward the Chippewa River, sixteen miles away. There, a British force had gathered to oppose the Americans. Brown posted his forces in position behind a creek with his right flank resting on the Niagara River and his left protected by a swamp. In front of the U.S. position was an open plain, beyond which flowed the Chippewa River; on the other side of the river were the British.⁴⁸

Brigadier General Winfield Scott's 1,300 strong brigade of Brown's command was unexpectedly confronted by a large British force on 5 July while preparing for an Independence Day parade near the Chippewa River. In the

⁴⁶ Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 78-80.

⁴⁷ Stewart, *American Military History Volume 1: The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917*, 148.

⁴⁸ Dale, *The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812*, 69 and 70.

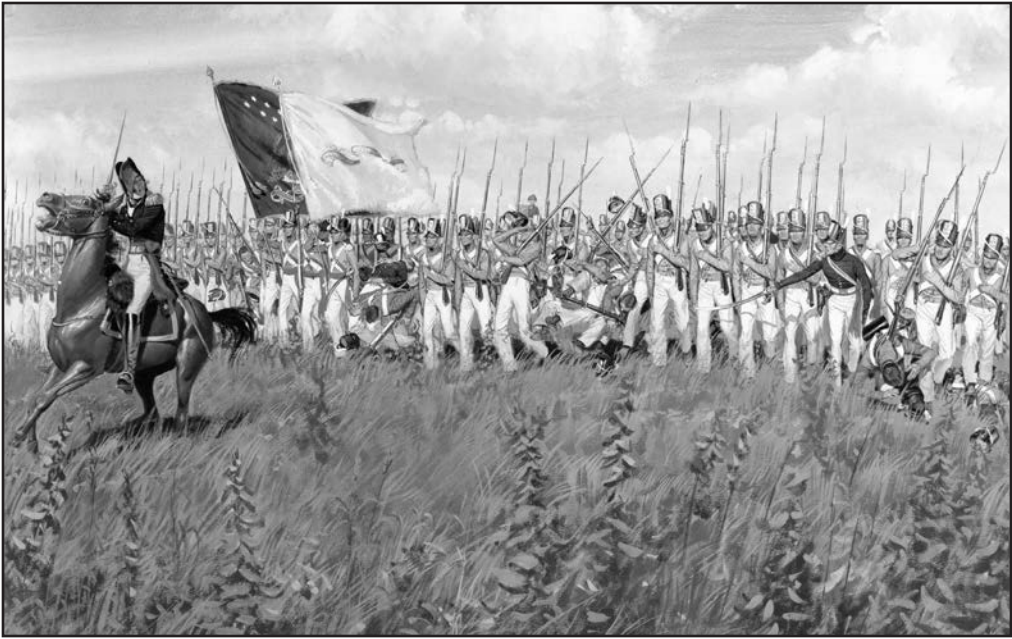


fighting, American troops stood their ground against a comparable number of British regulars. The British commander watched the advancing American line and realized his mistake: “Those are regulars, by God!” Scott’s well-trained troops broke the enemy line with a skillfully executed charge, sending the survivors into a hasty retreat. British losses were 137 killed and 304 wounded; U.S., 48 killed and 227 wounded. It was Winfield Scott’s brigade of infantry, drilled through the previous winter into a disciplined force. It drove the British from the battlefield; better still, after two years of seemingly endless failures, it renewed the American soldier’s faith in himself and his leaders.⁴⁹

After Chippewa, Brown’s force advanced to Queenston, but soon abandoned a proposed attack on Forts George

and Niagara when Chauncey’s fleet failed to cooperate in the operation. Instead, on 24-25 July 1814, Brown moved back to the Chippewa preparatory to a cross-country march along Lundy’s Lane to the west end of Lake Ontario. Unknown to Brown, the British had concentrated about 2,200 troops in the vicinity of Lundy’s Lane and 1,500 more in Forts George and Niagara. On 25 July, Scott’s brigade, moving again towards Queenston in an effort to draw off a British detachment threatening Brown’s line of communications on the U.S. side of the Niagara, ran into the enemy at the junction of Queenston Road and Lundy’s Lane. The ensuing battle, which eventually involved Brown’s force of 2,900 men and some 3,000 British, was fiercely fought and neither side gained a clear-cut victory. The Americans withdrew to the Chippewa, but the battle

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-74 and Wilson, *Maneuver and Firepower: The Evolution of Divisions and Separate Brigades*, 8.



The Battle of Chippewa (U.S. ARMY CENTER FOR MILITARY HISTORY)

On 5 July 1814 at Chippewa, Upper Canada, the British commander watched the advancing American line contemptuously, for its soldiers wore the rough gray coats issued to the New York militia that he had easily defeated before. As the ranks advanced steadily through murderous grapeshot he realized his mistake: "Those are regulars, by God!" It was Winfield Scott's brigade of infantry, drilled through the previous winter into a crack outfit. It drove the British from the battlefield; better still, after two years of seemingly endless failures, it renewed the American soldier's faith in himself and his leaders.

terminated Brown's invasion of Canada. Casualties were heavy, the British losing 878 and the Americans 854 in killed and wounded; both Brown and Scott were wounded and the British commander was wounded and captured. The British siege of Fort Erie between 2 August and 21 September 1814 failed to drive the Americans from that outpost on Canadian soil, but on 5 November they withdrew voluntarily. U.S. Navy Commodore Thomas Macdonough's victory over the Royal Navy on Lake Champlain on 11 September 1814 compelled Sir George Prevost, Governor

General of Canada, to call off his attack on Plattsburg with 11,000 troops.⁵⁰

Post War Reorganization

After the end of the war the militia units were released from federal service, the volunteers were discharged, and the Regular Army units were eventually reduced. Militia units performed, on the whole, as well and as poorly as the Regular Army. The defeats and humiliations of the regular forces during the first years of the war matched those of the militia, just as in a later period the Kentucky

⁵⁰ *Op cit*, 74-78 and Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 52.

volunteers at the Thames proved that the state citizen-soldier could perform well. The keys to the militiamen's performance were training and leadership, two areas over which the federal government had little control. Occasionally competent, the militia units were never dependable, though in relationship to the regulars their record was comparable.

No sooner was war over than Congress scrambled to fix the peacetime establishment of the military. An Act of 3 March 1815 set the peace establishment at 10,000 soldiers, divided among artillery, infantry, and rifle regiments. Despite the arguments in Army circles for a small mounted force, Congress stood firm in its dedication to economy and a minimum standing Army. Cavalry was eliminated. The Regiment of Dragoons was disbanded on 15 June 1815, and for seventeen years the Regular Army again had no cavalry.⁵¹ Congress authorized the retention of the Corps of Artillery as prescribed in 1814, but reduced the Regiment of Light Artillery to the strength authorized in 1808. With the units severely understrength, Congress on 17 May 1815 reduced it to eight battalions. Some of the artillery units served in the field with the forces on the frontier, but most of the companies were in scattered detachments along the seaboard to serve the guns emplaced in numerous fortifica-

tions that defended the coastal cities.⁵²

Eight infantry regiments and one rifle regiment arose from the ruins of those in existence. There was no effort to preserve the honors or traditional numbers of any of the prewar regiments. The new numbers were based on the seniority of the colonels, with the senior colonel commanding the 1st, and so forth. Resulting in the 1st Infantry Regiment being merged with other regiments and redesignated the 3rd, and the old 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th were likewise lost in the remains of disbanded regiments. The eight remaining infantry regiments were smaller than their war predecessors because, while the number of companies in each remained at ten, every company was authorized 78 men instead of 103. As a consequence of the reduction, 25,000 infantrymen were separated from the service. Another consequence was that the organization of the infantry regiment was set for the next thirty years. Not until the Mexican War, 31 years later, was it substantially expanded.⁵³

Although the United States failed to conquer Canada or obtain concessions on neutral rights, the Army's conduct earned respect abroad and inspired a newfound sense of national pride and confidence. With the war over the Army returned to its former duties of patrolling the frontier and guarding the coastline.

⁵¹ Stubbs and Conner, *Armor-Cavalry Part I: Regular Army and Army Reserve*, 7.

⁵² McKenney, *The Organizational History of Field Artillery 1775-2003*, 31.

⁵³ Mahon and Danysh, *Infantry Part I: Regular Army*, 14-15.