

Consequences of Rebellious Acts Stories of the 1837 & 1838 Rebellions

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CONSEQUENCES OF REBELLIOUS ACTS

STORIES OF THE 1837 & 1838 REBELLIONS

After his capture at the Battle of Windsor, Elijah Woodman wrote to his parents on 7 September 1839 from a prison cell in Fort Henry. Woodman noted that he had been waiting for eight months since his trial in London C.W. to find out whether he would be set free. On 30 July, eleven Patriots had been pardoned by the Executive Council and sent to Sackets Harbour, New York. This action might have been cause for optimism for some of the jailed rebels. However, Woodman's concluding remarks underlined ongoing uncertainty: "There is no knowing what will be the fate of the rest of us." Woodman and his colleagues would not have much longer to wait for an answer. On 22 September 1839 they were ordered to be moved to Quebec. Here they boarded the *H.M.S. Buffalo* to be transported to the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land. This is but one story of many generated as a consequence to rebellious acts during the 1837 and 1838 rebellions.

The intent of this themed issue of *Ontario History* is to investigate stories of individuals caught up in these events. It features original research by international authors and a comprehensive bibliography of articles and books. It is hoped

that this volume contributes to the body of knowledge of the twinned histories of Canada and Australia and adds to the historiography of the rebellions of 1837-38.

Tasmanian historian Dr. Tom Dunning contributes the first article. Dunning who has authored numerous articles about the North American political prisoners that were transported to Van Diemen's Land (see entries in Chris Raible's accompanying bibliography), proposes that the 1838 invasions of Canada can be regarded as an example of a borderland war. His re-interpretation of the Canadian rebellions of 1837 and 1838 is a useful argument written from an Australian perspective.

Parks Canada Research Historian Bob Garcia contributes the next article. His essay looks at the reaction of the British military authorities and the Canadian militia to the outbreak of rebellion in December 1837. Garcia's focus is on Kingston and specifically on Fort Henry. He reviews steps taken to organize and to deploy volunteers, and investigates the impact these men had on the security of the city of Kingston during this period of unrest and upheaval.

Dennis Carter-Edwards, Cultural

Resource Specialist for the Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site, considers the impact of the rebellions in a different geographic context. He investigates events in the Peterborough Region and concentrates on underlying tensions and patterns of behaviours brought into sharp focus under the stress of the rebellion crisis in the Newcastle District.

My article moves forward chronologically from the first three papers. It considers the fate of 93 English speaking political prisoners who were captured during the 1838 “Patriot Wars” and were transported to the penal colony of Van Diemen’s Land. Separated from the rest of the common felon population, I consider their time spent working at various probation stations and during their ticket of leave period prior to receiving their pardons.

Ontario author and historian Chris Raible concludes this issue of *Ontario History*, by contributing an extensive bibliography of published resources connected to various aspects of the Upper

Canadian Rebellions. Raible follows up and expands upon two previous bibliographies printed by the Ontario Historical Society, namely J. Davis Barnett, “The Books of the Political Prisoners and Exiles of 1838,” *Papers and Records of the Ontario Historical Society* (1918), v. 16, and a suggested bibliography in *1837 Rebellion Remembered* (1988), from the proceedings of a conference marking the 150th anniversary of the 1837 Upper Canadian Rebellion.

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