

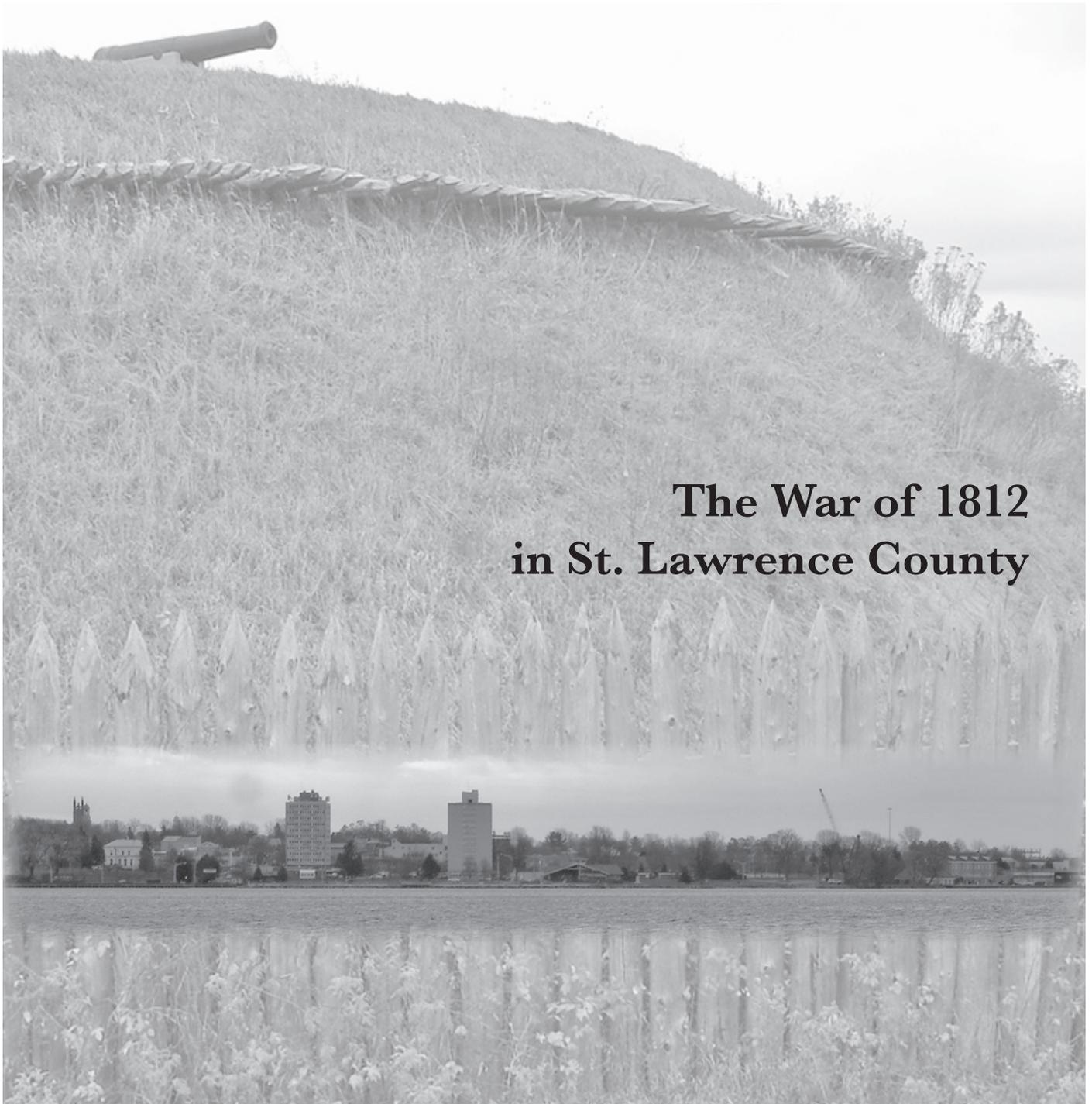
The St. Lawrence County Historical Association

QUARTERLY

Volume LVI

Number 3

2011



**The War of 1812
in St. Lawrence County**

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright House

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit, membership organization based at the Silas Wright House in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its trustees.

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Issue Editor

John and Susan Omohundro

On the Cover

A panorama of contemporary Ogdensburg imposed below the cannon on the ramparts at Fort Wellington in Prescott, Ontario. John Roseel's white mansion is left in the panorama, and David Parish's store is the dormered two-story building on right. Photos by J. Omohundro.

From the County Historian

by Trent Trulock

In 1814 we took a little trip
Along with Colonel Jackson down the mighty Mississipp'.
We took a little bacon and we took a little beans
And we caught the bloody British in the town of New Orleans.

We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin'
But there wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.
We fired once more and they began a'runnin'
Down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.

-Lyrics from the "Battle of New Orleans" by Johnny Horton¹

The lyrics above always come to my mind when I think of the War of 1812. There is, of course, a much better known song that came out of that conflict with the British, namely Francis Scott Key's "Star Spangled Banner," which was penned in 1814 and officially became the national anthem of the United States in 1931. The lyrics of the "Star Spangled Banner," such as "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there," refer to the British naval bombardment of Fort McHenry and the fact that the fort, and hence the city of Baltimore, were not lost to the British.

This year the St. Lawrence County Historical Association commemorates the bicentennial of the county's involvement in the War of 1812, which was fought 1812-1815. Some of the causes of the war were the English impressment of American sailors, the U.S. desire for free trade with both Britain and France, and the desire of the U.S. to expand its national borders. When the U.S. declared war on Britain in June 1812, the British were still busy fighting the French in the Napoleonic Wars, a series of conflicts that the new nation of the United States of America had struggled to stay out of.

The British developed naval superiority over the French during the Napoleonic Wars, becoming the early 19th-century world naval super power. But the British navy had a major problem keeping their superiority: desertion. British sailors



The Silas Wright House, home of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association.

deserted from the navy for numerous reasons, including poor pay, bad living conditions and brutal discipline. And one way the British navy could resupply sailors was to board American ships and remove any sailors they suspected of being British citizens. This led to the wrongful abduction of some American citizens, which as you might imagine did not sit well with many in the U.S. and helped to flame pro-war sentiments.

There were some in the U.S. who wanted to expand our national borders to the west and north. This meant getting rid of the British, who controlled the Pacific Northwest, as well as Upper and Lower Canada. The idea of annexing Canada was not new in 1812. It had been attempted without success during the Revolutionary War. The idea of removing these lands from British rule would do more than just add more land to the U.S. It was also thought to be a way to secure the safety and integrity of the nation. In fact, the War of 1812 is sometimes referred to as America's Second War for Independence. Not everyone was in favor of war or kicking the British out of North America, especially people who had personal and business relationships in Upper Canada and England, some of whom were residents of St. Lawrence County.

Other music that comes to my mind when thinking of the War of 1812 is Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture."² This score is probably best known as that cannon song that is played by orchestras on

Independence Day and other patriotic occasions. When I was young, I assumed that the “1812 Overture” had something to do with the U.S. War of 1812. Of course it is dangerous to assume. I’ve since learned that Tchaikovsky wrote his overture in 1880 to commemorate Russia’s defense of Moscow from Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars. So right time period, but wrong war.

I began with lyrics from the “Battle of New Orleans,” as they have stuck with me since I heard them on the radio as a child in the late 1960’s (nope, I wasn’t around yet when the song was released by Johnny Horton in 1959). The Colonel Jackson in the song goes on to become U. S. President Andrew Jackson. The Battle of New Orleans took place in January 1815, which is actually after the war officially ended. But word of the peace treaty with Britain didn’t reach U.S. shores until February 1815. The Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war, called for the return of prisoners of war, for land that had been taken in battle to be returned to each side, and also contained an arbitration clause, so that any future problems could be solved without resorting to war. For the first time in its young history the United States could focus on domestic problems rather than worry about foreign affairs. Perhaps the most noticeable outcome, 200 years after the war, is that the U.S. and Canada enjoy the longest non-militarized international border in the world. That might be the best outcome that residents of a border county like St. Lawrence could hope for.

I’m saddened to report that we have recently lost two long-time historians, Stella Tamblin, Richville Village Historian, and Marie Rocca, Russell Town Historian. Stella passed away on April 28, 2012 and served as Richville’s historian from 1990-2012, as well as president of the Richville Historical Association in 1986 and from the early 1990’s until 2012. Marie passed away on June 5, 2012 and served as Russell’s historian from 1999-2012. Marie was instrumental in revitalizing Russell Memorial Hall. Both Stella and Marie will be deeply missed by all who had the good fortune to know and work with them.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/classic-country/battle-of-new-orleans---johnny-horton-14929.html#.T9daK7VYvN0>
- 2 If you’ve seen the movie “V for Vendetta” you’ll remember that this is the music V plays on the loudspeakers when he blows up the Old Bailey and Parliament.

The War of 1812 in St. Lawrence County

John and Susan Omohundro

It's difficult to imagine today that two hundred years ago the United States' greatest enemy was located just across the St. Lawrence River. After the American Revolution ended in 1783, relations with our ex-colonial motherland, England, remained rocky. John Graves Simcoe, the governor of Upper Canada from 1791 to 1796, retained ambitions to destabilize the new republic and draw it back into the empire. Meanwhile, some Americans, especially the western "War Hawks," viewed Upper Canada as a plum ripe for adding to U. S. territory.

The colony of Upper Canada, which is Ontario today, was created in 1791, taking territory from Quebec. The British wanted to increase the region's population with people loyal to the empire, so it offered free land to settlers. By 1812 Upper Canada had grown from 14,000 to 75,000 inhabitants.¹ But the majority of these were born in the U.S. Among them were about 6,000 early Loyalists, emigrating just after the Revolutionary War, in 1783-84.² By 1812, 60% of inhabitants were later Loyalist immigrants.³ This certainly raised doubts about where the inhabitants' allegiance lay.

Since the U. S. population vastly outnumbered Canada's, many Americans (and some Canadians) thought it would be relatively easy for the U.S. to subdue and annex Canada. There are 6 or 7 million of us and only half a million of them, the Americans observed, so it should be easy. Specifically, Upper Canada had only 75,000 inhabitants in 1812, while New York State had 1,000,000.⁴

On the American side, one of the provisions of the Jay Treaty of 1796 was that the British give up their outlying forts, one of which was Fort Oswegatchie at the mouth of the Oswegatchie River. The British soldiers departed in June; Nathan Ford, the land agent for Samuel Ogden, arrived in August, with the intention of building a permanent settlement. In this he was successful, as Ogdensburg claimed a population over 1200 after 16 years. By the time of the war, David Parish and Joseph Rosseel occupied large homes

near the waterfront, and Parish had a large stone warehouse/shop on the waterfront. In other words, the affluent, successful families had much to lose to invaders.

Indeed, most residents of northern New York had no desire to engage in war with Canada. We'll show that before, during and after the War of 1812, which many historians consider the American Revolution Part Two, St. Lawrence County and Upper Canada got along just fine, thank you, and cursed "Mr. Madison's War." Most local leaders were Federalists; ties of blood and trade across the border were numerous. Thus, fortunately, we largely avoided the bloodshed and destruction of civilian communities that took place on the Niagara frontier and further west.

The Forgotten War

The War of 1812 is not one we Americans think about often. The 2011 PBS documentary directed by Larry Hott calls it "the forgotten war."⁵ The war only lasted two years and there were no (at least no apparent) consequences. What we did learn in middle school was incomplete and misleading. We remember visions of naval battles in Lake Erie, the British burning Washington D.C., "the Star Spangled Banner," "Old Hickory" Jackson's victory at New Orleans, and Indian massacres.

In this memory there is usually no trace of the U. S. sacking Canada's capital of York, the horrors both sides inflicted on civilians in the Niagara and Detroit theatres of war, and the Americans' failed invasion of Montreal and Upper Canada. Readers probably can't identify any official reasons the U. S. declared war against Britain. (One of the provocations to war, the British impressment of U. S. sailors into its navy, had already ended by the date of declaration.) Most of us don't remember the provisions of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war in December 1814, except that it ended the fighting (more or less).

We (the authors) grew interested in the war after living many years in the North Country when we discovered that St. Lawrence County lay upon

a most strategic war corridor, experienced several conflicts, and was close to some important war incidents. A visit to Sackets Harbor in Jefferson County reminded us of the vigorous arms race in warship-building that the Americans pursued against the British across Lake Ontario in Kingston. Later, standing on the ramparts of Fort Wellington in Prescott, we looked in surprise across the St. Lawrence River, which is fairly narrow at that point, at the roofs of Ogdensburg, upon which the British could have rained down red-hot cannonballs. We have visited two soldiers' tombstones on the Russell ("Military") Turnpike and have heard of the Russell arsenal. Our house in Hannawa Falls was built on land a Vermont-born young man acquired from the federal government for service in the war on the border. A final reminder of the war arose during our research into the potash business of Sewall Raymond of Potsdam (*Quarterly* Vol. 53, no 1, 2008). Raymond's letters to his agents before and during the war express his frustration at the difficulties of moving goods to and from Montreal—a practice that was illegal and that War Hawks considered treason, but was common

practice in this region during the war.

In the hope of sharpening readers' memory in this bicentennial year of the War of 1812, we submit the following review of events in St. Lawrence County related to the war.

The Embargo

The British navy, heavily committed in war against Napoleon's France, refused America's demands to cease boarding U. S. vessels and commandeering sailors it considered British subjects (i.e., anyone born in Britain), so President Jefferson's Congress in 1807 passed an embargo on trade with Britain and France. This impediment to commerce was extremely unpopular in the northeastern states generally and northern New York specifically for the following reasons. The Northeast was populated with merchants of the opposition Federalist Party, and St. Lawrence County was only a river's-width away from relatives, friends and trading partners in Upper Canada. The St. Lawrence River made Montreal our nearest trading center. Contact with the rest of the Empire State was over poor,

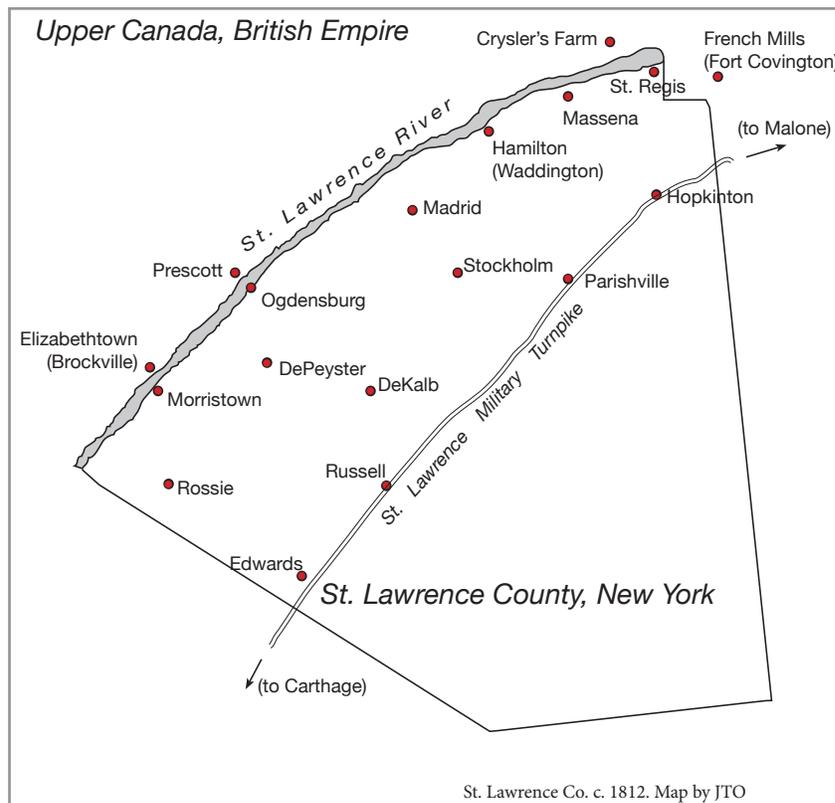


Figure 1. St. Lawrence County and Ontario communities referred to in this article. Note that a few communities had different names in 1812. Map by J. Omohundro.

seasonal roads. The best was the St. Lawrence Turnpike, today often referred to as the Russell Turnpike, built in 1810 to connect Plattsburgh on the east to Carthage in Jefferson County on the west (Figure 1). The county was poorly armed, with one small arsenal in Russell holding “a few old muskets.”⁶ As a consequence, the embargo was largely ignored here.

Judge Nathan Ford, land agent for Samuel Ogden, the owner of large tracts along the St. Lawrence River, was the political kingpin in the county, and he was an avid Federalist, of the “peace party.” Ford wrote, “The sound of war has palsied the sale of land in this county.”⁷

Furthermore, many of the county’s gentry, that is, the major landholders and their agents, were not patriotic native-born “Yankees.” The wealthiest merchant, David Parish, was German. His extensive mercantile network contributed to Ogdensburg’s preeminence as a center of trade and population in the region. By 1812, 1,245 people lived in that settlement. Parish and his agents built grand houses, a trotting track and formal gardens. Parish also established a tavern and distillery in Parishville and an iron furnace in Rossie. Parish’s land agent, Joseph Rosseel, was a Belgian. Parish’s nephew and mercantile agent was John Ross, a Scot. His farm manager was Dutch and his iron furnace foreman in Rossie was English. Parish expected Northern New York eventually to be annexed to Upper Canada and he planned for the prospect.⁸

Parish and the other landowners were threatened with ruin by the embargo and ensuing war. Their many tenants needed to sell potash, furs, lumber, and whiskey or they would default on their rents and mortgages. Canada was a willing and accessible market. Hart Massey, the collector of customs in the county, was charged with enforcing the embargo, and he was an unpopular and worried man. He wrote in 1809 to the Secretary of the Treasury,

[The area residents] appear determined to evade the laws at the risk of their lives. More particularly in [Ogdensburg] I am informed, they have entered into a combination not to entertain nor even suffer any other force to be stationed in that vicinity, and their threats are handed out that if I or any other officer should come there again, they will take a rawhide to them... My life and the lives of my deputies are threatened daily; what will be the fate of us God only knows.⁹

Two companies under the command of Captains Samuel Cherry and Thomas Anderson were stationed in Ogdensburg in 1809 to enforce the embargo, but they were ostracized by the townspeople, who would not sell them provisions. When these troops marched out in 1810 after the gentry complained to Washington, locals lined the road in celebration, hooting on tin horns and banging cowbells.¹⁰

Fear of War

President Madison’s Democrat-controlled Congress declared war on Great Britain in June, 1812. Preparations in St. Lawrence County had begun in May. Militia Brigadier General Jacob Brown, of Brownville, Jefferson County, ordered Colonel Thomas Benedict to raise forty-three men for a militia unit to be stationed in DeKalb, and Colonel Stone to raise thirty-seven more, also for DeKalb. Another eighty militiamen were stationed in Ogdensburg under Captain Hawkins. By October 1812, militia and regulars in Ogdensburg numbered 800.¹¹ Elisha Risdon, a farmer who kept a diary in Hopkinton, recorded in September 1812 that he purchased a rifle from a neighbor and was drafted into the militia along with thirteen other villagers by Captain Hopkins.¹² These new recruits were stationed in Waddington for their six-month militia obligation.

The thought of war with their neighbors initially threw the county’s population into a panic. They feared the British would send Indians across the border to massacre them in their beds.

On the slightest alarm, often from trivial or accidental causes, a rumor would originate and spread through an entire settlement; the timid would flee to the woods, and not unfrequently the most grotesque and ludicrous scenes were enacted. Families hastening off and leaving their houses open... and each fugitive from the danger they apprehended, augmented the fears of the others which they met by relating their own. Many of these did not return till peace and some never.¹³

Such fears enticed a young prankster to gallop on horseback through DePeyster sending up an alarm of Indian attack, which led to a general evacuation for nought. Next year the prankster was discovered and flogged.¹⁴

In fact, Indians only crossed the border a couple of times, once with British regulars in the



Figure 2: The British were coming! And their stay in Potsdam resulted in the purchase of this silver spoon. Melinda Raymond was in town in 1811 nursing her sick brother Benjamin Raymond when she met Liberty Knowles, a prominent lawyer and businessman. They wed in February, 1812, moving into a large two-story house on Market Street. In April 1812 they vacated their ground floor to make room for some British officers, who stayed for an unspecified time. War was declared in mid-June, so it is likely the British had moved on by then, but when they left, they gave the young marrieds some money for their lodging, with which Melinda bought a set of table silverware. This table- or serving-spoon from that set was eventually donated to the Potsdam Village Museum.

The coin-silver spoon is engraved with Melinda's initials. The maker's mark on reverse is "Carson and Hall"— an Albany silversmith operating between 1814 and 1819, so Melinda probably purchased her table silver after the war.

But why were the officers in Potsdam at that time? Local lore implies that the British "occupied" the house or the village, but this is not literally true. Were the redcoats shopping? Spying? Visiting? Did they commandeer the Knowles house or were they invited as lodgers? Photo by J. Omohundro.

invasion of Ogdensburg, when they behaved no worse than the soldiers, and once in search of Canadian deserters. The fear of Indians, however, forced the Mohawks at St. Regis to lay low; when they traveled, they were compelled to display papers signed by a local citizen certifying their peacefulness.

Blockhouses for defense were erected in Gouverneur, Rossie, and Massena, each surrounded by a tall palisade of pointed logs. An arsenal was constructed in Russell during the embargo (figure 3). In Stockholm the doctor's house was encircled by a double wall of 16-foot pickets as a redoubt for residents in case of attack.¹⁵ General Jacob Brown, when assigned in October 1812 to Ogdensburg, ordered the reconstruction of Fort La Presentation as Fort Oswegatchie, but it was never completed.

By rights, St. Lawrence County should have been in the thick of the most desperate military campaigns. The sharpest U. S. strategy should have been to control the St. Lawrence River, thus cutting the main British supply line to Upper Canada. Instead, David Parish and his merchant colleagues at Ogdensburg won an unwritten agreement from Washington that our county would remain a noncombative region. The agreement was facilitated by Parish et al.'s loan of \$7.5 million to the cash-strapped federal government— at 7.5% interest, a good business deal.¹⁶ The British Governor-General, Sir George Prevost, welcomed this arrangement. Not only did the British supply lines stay open, but northern New Yorkers and Vermonters steadily provisioned the enemy. A sign near the St. Lawrence River displayed an American eagle and a British Lion, with the caption, "if you don't scratch I won't bite"¹⁷ (Figure 4).

Early Hostilities

In the first year of the war there was some scratching and biting, as both sides attempted to grab easy war booty.

When war was declared in June, eight freight schooners were in Ogdensburg's harbor. Being unescorted by warships and within range of the guns of Fort Wellington in Prescott, the schooners made a dash upriver for the safety of Sackets Harbor. The British captured two, offloading their crews and passengers on an island, seizing and burning the cargos. The remaining six retreated to Ogdensburg. In July General Jacob Brown, based in Sackets Harbor, sent the *USS Julia*



Figure 3: The Russell Armory was built in 1810 and held about 500 muskets at the beginning of the war. It was torn down in the 1940s. Photo from SLCHA archives.

downriver to protect the remaining schooners. She was mounted with one 18-lb cannon and two 6-lb guns and was accompanied by a Durham boat (Figure 5) carrying a rifle company. The *Julia* encountered the *HMS Earl of Moira*, a warship of 18 guns, offshore at Morristown. The two vessels fired at each other for three hours before separating, with no loss of life or major damage to either vessel. In late summer, 1812, the schooners slipped up river into the lake and safety.

Also in July, two ambitious colonels in Ogdensburg, Solomon Van Rensselaer, cousin of the famous Major General Stephen Van

Rensselaer, and Thomas B. Benedict, the general's aide and a native of DeKalb (see *Williamstown Gazette* 9:2, Spring 2006), hatched a plan to slip across the river at night and burn the *HMS Earl of Gloucester* in Prescott. They could raise only 66 of the 120 men they estimated they needed for the task, so they dropped the scheme.

In September 1812, another group from Ogdensburg manning a gunboat and Durham boat launched a raid near Lisbon on a British convoy of bateaux moving up the river to supply Kingston. The bateaux were defended sharply by a regiment of Canadian militia. The Americans lost their Durham boat, suffered some casualties, and nearly lost their gunboat, so the convoy escaped to complete its trip.¹⁸

In late September, George Harison, managing his family's Franklin County lands from Malone, wrote to his father,

The people of the town of Massena who are all Democrats [the President's party] have made themselves conspicuous by stopping and firing upon boats and rafts in the River St. Lawrence. At length, hearing of the capture of General Hull [and the fall of Detroit] and alarmed with the threat of a visit by the inhabitants from the other side of the river, [they] have deserted [Massena] altogether.¹⁹

In October the British at Prescott returned the favor. American General Jacob Brown, newly in command of Ogdensburg, had the previous month raided Gananoque, the last staging point for British freight convoys heading downriver to Montreal. Brown's troops routed a small contingent of militia, seized some muskets, and burned a storehouse containing flour and beef. In retaliation, the British in Prescott launched



Figure 4: The eagle of the U. S. and the lion of Upper Canada share a hotel sign in Canton dating to this period. Courtesy of SLCHA, on permanent loan from St. Lawrence University. Photo taken at TAUNY by J. Omohundro



Figure 5: A Durham boat, an oared troop carrier made in Pennsylvania and used in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. From Google images.

boats to raid Ogdensburg, but were repelled by Brown's shrewd shoreline placement of his few cannons. Brown then returned to his home in Brownville, leaving Captain Benjamin Forsyth and his company of riflemen in charge. Forsyth didn't buy into the Federalists' plans for peace and quiet, and Ogdensburg was about to suffer.

Also in October, 200 troops from Troy under the command of Major Young attacked the Mohawk village of St. Regis, where a small company of British soldiers was posted. The raid

surprised the British, so Young captured forty prisoners and housed them in Malone. Young also captured a British flag, which was displayed in Albany as a rare war trophy.²⁰

The Invasion of Ogdensburg

Forsyth's Rifles were a bold and adventurous group. They were recruited among sharpshooters in Virginia and were led by a flamboyant officer who believed in the war and sought engagement with the enemy. Benjamin Forsyth also encouraged Canadian deserters and served as a model for local civilian raiders. Most Ogdensburg locals, however, considered him and his men little better than hoodlums and feared British reprisals for their actions. And they were right to worry.

In February 1813, Forsyth led his men to Elizabethtown [Brockville] where American prisoners were held. They recovered their countrymen, captured British prisoners, and carried away supplies.²¹ For this Forsyth was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

His raid provoked Lt. Colonel "Red George" Macdonell at Prescott's fort to respond—

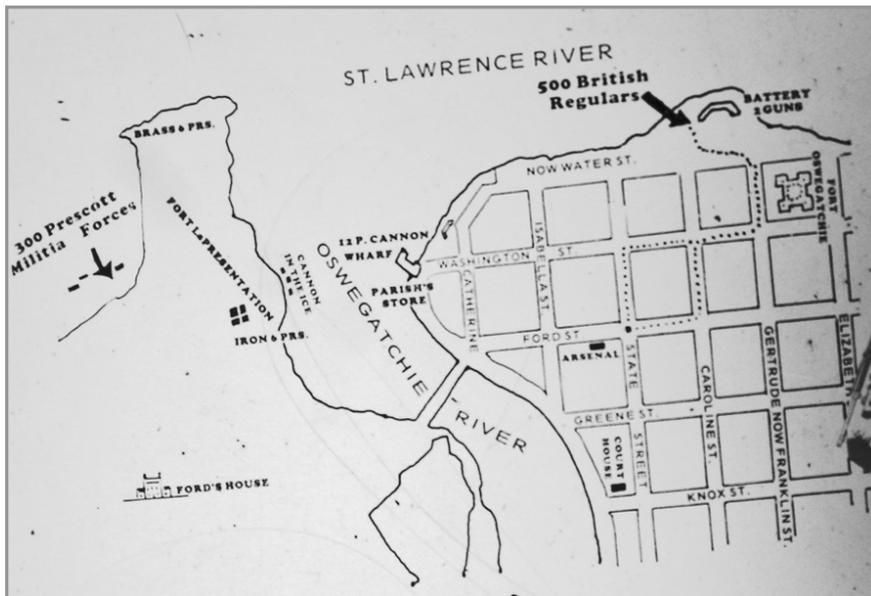


Figure 6: Above: A map of Ogdensburg at the time of the invasion by Macdonell's forces from Prescott. From Ogdensburg.info.org. Below: Fort Wellington in Prescott housed four 24-pound cannon, three 18-pounders, and a few 12-pounders. Some guns on the ramparts are seen here and some were placed on a battery at the shoreline where the photographer stands. Photos by J. Omohundro.

even against the advice of his governor general. He was instructed to limit his operations to a demonstration of force on the ice. But when Macdonell assembled 800 troops of his Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and militia at dawn on Feb 22, he found the ice firm, so he ordered an advance under cover of cannon-fire from the fort. Ogdensburg was caught by surprise before breakfast (Figure 6).

The British drove Forsyth's 300 men from the fort, dismantled it, burned the troop barracks, and moved its military stores to Prescott. The British also pushed the defending American militia through the streets of town and into the woods. Forsyth retreated to DePeyster and then to Sackets Harbor, not to return. The British ransacked the private houses and took fifty-two prisoners back to Prescott. Only David Parish's residence and a couple of others' were spared, indicating that the tacit truce with the enemy was still in effect. When word reached Prescott that Macdonell had routed the defending force, townspeople crossed the ice to join the looting.

The day after the attack, American militia returned to town. Ogdensburg's citizens set about retrieving their personal effects, as if all of this had been a terrible mistake—which of course it was, from the point of view of many locals and even of the Canadian Governor General. A Mrs. York, whose husband was a war supporter and who was taken prisoner to Prescott, escaped to the bush. She wrote to her brother in New York City:

The next day I returned; our house was plundered of almost every thing, and my husband a prisoner on the other side... They did not leave any article of clothing, not even a handkerchief— they took all my bedding but left the beds; they broke my looking glasses and even my knives... I went to one of my acquaintances on the other side, where I was favorably received. I applied to the commanding officer for the purpose of ascertaining whether I could procure any of my clothes; he assured me that I should have them if I could find them, but did not trouble himself to make any inquiry. My journey was not lost; I procured the release of my husband, who was paroled and returned with me... they were not contented with what the Indians and soldiers could plunder during the battle, but after it was over, the women on the

other side came across, and took what was left."²²

Parish and the Ogdensburg gentry complained vociferously to Washington that Forsyth was provoking trouble. No troops were sent to Ogdensburg for the remainder of the war. In the fall of 1813, when a Colonel Lockett visited Ogdensburg to prepare for the passage of Wilkinson's forces, Fort Wellington shelled the town briefly, perhaps as a cautionary reminder.

The Invasion of Montreal

St. Lawrence County was the scene of American advances, retreats, and British reprisals surrounding one of the Americans' most important military campaigns, the attempt to capture Montreal, which would have cut the British supply lines to Upper Canada.

In November 1813 St. Lawrence River shoreline residents saw Major General James Wilkinson's 300 small craft transporting soldiers downriver to meet General Wade Hampton's troops for a combined march on Montreal. Eighteen hundred soldiers disembarked at Morristown for the night. The next day, Wilkinson ordered the troop boats to land about two miles above Ogdensburg, unload their cargo and guns, and march around the town to avoid Fort Wellington's 24-pound cannon. The empty troop boats then ran the gauntlet and were fired upon, but without effect. Wilkinson's troops re-embarked and landed below Prescott on the Canadian side, where they encountered fierce resistance from outnumbered but well-trained British Regular Army troops at Crysler's Farm, near the site of the present-day Upper Canada Village. Wilkinson's units retreated up the Salmon River to French Mills (now called Fort Covington for the Brigadier General who died from his wounds in the battle at Crysler's Farm) and called upon General Hampton to come from Plattsburgh to assist him. Hampton, ever reluctant to cooperate with Wilkinson, refused. He had just suffered his own crushing defeat, at Chateaugay, south of Montreal. Wilkinson went into winter quarters at French Mills. Conditions there were miserable. The winter was unusually cold, there were insufficient blankets and medicines, and shelters were primitive huts. Many soldiers died— 216 in December alone — and others deserted.²³ Some venal officers sold rations and collected dead men's pay.²⁴

Surgeon James Mann described his experiences there in a report submitted in 1816.

He went to French Mills from Plattsburgh on December 15, 1813. He found French Mills “a pleasant village” with 250 hospital beds. However, disease was rampant. In one corps of 160 men, 75 were sick: 39 with diarrhea and dysentery, 18 with pneumonia, 6 with typhus, and 12 with “paralysis of all the extremities.” He added, “many of the paralytics, on our arrival at the Mills, were attended with mortification of the toes and feet.”²⁵ These he treated with opium and stimulants.

Medical supplies at French Mills were inadequate and their transit poorly supervised, with attendant loss of materials. The nearest source of hospital stores was Albany, 250 miles away. Food was lacking also. “The poor subsistence, which the bread of the worst quality afforded, was almost the only support which could be had for nearly seven weeks” (p 120). Mann noted the need for better cleanliness and diet, less crowding, and more clothing (pp 123-24).

The poor conditions took a toll on a group of men who were not physically strong at the outset. Mann noted that “It may not be as generally known as it should be, that a large proportion of the army were not, when first enlisted, fit for

soldiers.” In addition many were “habitually intemperate” (p 122). It is hardly surprising, then, that “The greatest evils, to which the army has been subjected since the war, are diseases and their consequent mortality” (p 122).

In February 1814, finally, General Wilkinson ordered General Jacob Brown, who had been left in charge of quarters while Wilkinson rested in a private home in Malone, to move his ailing troops to Sackets Harbor over the St. Lawrence turnpike (Figure 7).

In late February, British General Hercules Scott, learning of Wilkinson’s weakness, led a force of 1800 seasoned regulars and militia across the St. Lawrence River in pursuit. He drove Brown’s stragglers out of French Mills, confiscating foodstuffs and military supplies. He then occupied Malone to search for arms, ammunition, and other military supplies. The prisoners he took were paroled, most being too ill or weak to travel. Local teams and drivers were pressed into service to move the booty back to Canada. Private property, meanwhile, was respected. Scott’s invaders then split for incursions both east and west, burning barracks, blockhouses, and boats and filling their sleighs with supplies.

The Invasion of Hopkinton and Malone

Scott learned through a spy at French Mills that there was a quantity of flour stored in Hopkinton. Major DeHeirne and thirty men in six sleighs made the 28-mile trip under cover of



Figure 7: Veterans of the northern campaign lie in two graves on the Russell Turnpike (now Rt. 24) in the Town of Pierrepont. One is unknown except for his date of death. Of the second, Elijah Sackett, we know that he was born in January 1768 in Massachusetts; he was married and 46 years old when he died. He had been a military man for a long time, serving in Colonel Solomon Baker’s Regiment of the Brigade of Militia of Washington County, NY. He began as an ensign in 1800 and was promoted to lieutenant in 1807. We don’t know his movements during the war, just that he had the misfortune to expire on the way from Plattsburgh to Sackets Harbor.²⁶ It is more likely he succumbed to illness than injury: about 8% of American troops died of illness, about 3% of wounds (by comparison, about 13% deserted).²⁷ Photo by John Omohundro.

night, arriving at dawn to surprise the residents, who put up no resistance.

DeHeirne posted a guard at every house and searched for guns, blankets, and horses. In Judge Hopkins' barn his men found about 300 barrels of flour that Wilkinson's evacuating soldiers had left behind in early March on their way to Sackets Harbor (Figure 8). Judge Hopkins and fellow villagers had no desire to become a plum for British picking, so they had objected, even offering to transport the flour somewhere else, but to no avail. After loading what the sleighs could carry, DeHeirne ordered the rest destroyed. As Sanford's history of Hopkinton reports, "the inhabitants, mostly women, begged so hard that [the British] finally desisted, and distributed what was left among the people"²⁸ A Mr. Thomas was paid in silver as well as some flour to shoe the British horses. The British returned to French Mills that evening, taking a few adult males from Hopkinton with them, but upon arrival released their hostages to straggle back home.²⁹

The last military event in the county during



Figure 8: Judge Josiah Hopkin's farm in Hopkinton, showing the barns where the flour bound for winter encampment at French Mills was probably stored, and where the British raiders found it. Photo from SLCHA archives.

the war occurred in summer, 1814. British Captain Thomas Frazer and sixty troops crossed the St. Lawrence at Hammond in pursuit of horse thieves— not a surprising crime, given the county's losses in horses earlier in the year. Frazer occupied Rossie, whose residents secured his promise not to destroy David Parish's newly-built iron furnace there if it did not produce war munitions (Figure 9). Parish had signed a

government contract to manufacture cannonballs in his furnace, but he never delivered. After a short occupation, Frazer's party recruited volunteers to row them back toward the St. Lawrence across Black Lake.³⁰ Good faith was observed on both sides. Frazer's return was not fired upon by Americans, and Frazer offered to return anything looted during the raid. The story has been reported that a Mrs. Stevens in Rossie sent a male neighbor as emissary to Kingston to report the loss of her silver teaspoons. Frazer is said to have found and returned the silver.³¹

Life During Wartime

Military conflicts in the county may have been upsetting and occasionally lethal but they did not set the tenor of relations between St. Lawrence County and Canada. "As the [conflict] moved out of the immediate area, the people soon lost what little interest had been stimulated by their brief encounter with the British army."³² The county's political and economic leaders and the British authorities both sought to maintain constant and mutually beneficial cross-border relations. The Americans' need for trade with Canada has been described earlier. The British needed American agricultural products because Upper Canada's subsistence agriculture wasn't geared for a wartime economy. War with France had cut Britain's Baltic timber supply, so it turned to Canadian forests, making lumberjacks of farmers. Drafting men for the Canadian militia further reduced local food production.

Canada's Governor General Sir George Prevost wrote, "Two-thirds of the army in Canada are at this moment eating beef provided by American contractors, drawn principally from the states of New York and Vermont."³³ David Parish's agent John Ross reported to Parish, "The day before yesterday upwards of 100 [American] oxen went through Prescott, yesterday about 200."³⁴

One cost of a peaceful border for the British was the steady flow of deserters, who were encouraged by American officers such as Forsyth and welcomed, even protected, by the county's residents.

John Ross and Judge Nathan Ford often crossed the St. Lawrence for social engagements in Prescott, and red-coated soldiers or their wives were often seen walking Ogdensburg's streets, shopping at Parish's emporium, or attending teas and dinners at the gentry's fine houses.

This active fraternizing didn't sit well with

American military officers in the field because they were not “in” on the arrangement between St. Lawrence County and Washington. General Zebulon Pike sent forty soldiers to St. Lawrence County to arrest nine smugglers, carrying them to the brig in Sackets Harbor. Judge Ford retaliated by imprisoning two American officers, Lieutenant Loring Austin and a Lieutenant Wells, on obscure charges and holding them at high bail. The standoff was settled when the courts threw out all charges.³⁵ All totaled, there were twelve arrests for treason in the county, including an arrest of Judge Ford himself, who was carried off and interrogated in New York City. None of those charged was convicted of treason.³⁶

The federal government pursued a policy of encouraging raids on the British and discouraging smuggling. Meanwhile, the county gentry strove for the opposite: to discourage raids and facilitate trade.³⁷ Judge Ford took the lead in enforcing the tacit peace by sharing information with the British to assist them in apprehending American counterfeiters and horse raiders (hence the accusations of treason).

One reason the British chose to invade the U. S. through Lake Champlain in 1814 was to assure continued food supplies from northern New York and Vermont. British also predicted that the Federalists who dominated this region would throw their allegiance to Britain and threaten secession. The invasion was turned back by strong resistance from Americans in the Battle of Plattsburgh.



Figure 9: The iron furnace in Rossie, the first in northern New York, was an extension of David Parish’s commercial empire in St. Lawrence County. Construction began in 1813 and operation in 1815. The furnace was supplied by ore from the Caledonia iron mine nearby in Somerville. Rossie also built a blockhouse to defend residents during the war. Photo from SLCHA archives.

Aftermath

So who won the war? What were the consequences for St. Lawrence County and our trading partners—or enemies, depending upon how you look at it—in Upper Canada? Our conclusions are non-expert judgments and are influenced by our sources. For an alternate view, we invited Bill Stewart of Ottawa, who recently completed his dissertation in Canadian military history, to comment on this article.

A *Toronto Star* article in 1962, the sesquicentennial of the war, proposed that both sides won.³⁸ Casualties were few and many individuals prospered on both sides. Canadian farmers, for example, received high prices for their goods and services from the British army. Americans finally developed their own firearms industry and began to fund a standing professional army with competent officers. Our national anthem was drafted aboard a ship at anchor in 1814 as Francis Scott Key observed the British navy shelling Fort McHenry in the Chesapeake Bay. The big losers in the war were the Native Americans. In the Treaty of Ghent, the British abandoned their Indian allies, thus removing them as a major obstacle to westward expansion.

Canada gained because the U. S. reduced its northern ambitions and turned to the west and south. No government attempt to invade Canada or annex territory militarily was ever made again. In the Canadian Rebellion of 1837-38, rebel leaders recruited Americans to invade Canada at Windsor, Niagara, and across the St. Lawrence River. The Battle of the Windmill was an example. But American officials at all levels strongly opposed these actions. Also, after the Civil War, Irish veterans mounted the Fenian Rebellion in hopes of taking Canada as a hostage to win British concessions in Ireland, but this too the U.S. government opposed.

Bill Stewart points out, however, that annexation of Canada was an idea slow to die. As late as 1911, U. S. senators were quoted as advocating annexation—the kind of talk that played a role in the defeat that year of the Liberal government that had negotiated a free trade deal with the U.S.

Upper Canada shifted from being a forward base for British ambitions in North America to a defensive bastion. It set about fortifying itself, building or refurbishing forts in Kingston and Prescott. Construction of the Rideau Canal from

Kingston to Ottawa provided a more secure supply corridor. No safe supply route was developed on the U. S. side of the river, perhaps because the new Erie Canal provided a better alternative for supplying the midwest.

Soon after the war, both sides began writing histories interpreting the war and selectively reporting on it. Both Canadian and U. S. histories have often treated the war as a conflict between two nations, but in fact the conflict was, in Taylor's terms, a civil war. It contributed to the formation of two nations from what had been a mosaic of republicans, loyalists, neutrals like Parish, French-Canadians, and Native Americans on both sides of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

One of the significant consequences of the war for Upper Canada was to generate the idea of a Canadian national identity among disparate communities that had to cooperate to defend themselves from American invasion. Only 21 years old at the war's outset, Upper Canada rapidly acquired a history, common purpose, mythology with heroes, and a clearer contrast with the brash republicans to the south. As resentment toward the American aggressors increased, Canadian patriotism increased.

Bill Stewart adds, "This was the foundation myth in many respects for not just Upper Canada [Ontario] but for English Canada. The key idea was, we are not Americans. For roughly 100 years after the War of 1812 it drove a closer bond with England and a strong identity among the leading lights of Canada of being British subjects and members of the empire, on which the sun never set."

The Canadian border became less permeable for immigrants. Canada ceased encouraging American settlers by offering land grants and began recruiting Scots and English from abroad and inviting British war veterans to settle. Whereas in 1812 the majority of Upper Canada's population was American-born, by 1842 it was only 7%.³⁹ The Americans were becoming a foreign people, and the Canadians in perception and fact were becoming "other-than-American."

Peace meant the end of the economic boom for Upper Canada when the British military presence was greatly reduced. Hard times persisted for decades, contributing to the Rebellion of 1837-38. St. Lawrence County, meanwhile, grew in population and economy after the war. The federal government encouraged settlement in the county by offering "Military Bounty Land" in the

county as war pay to veterans. By 1828, eleven more towns had been added to the thirteen at the beginning of the war. The population grew from 8,000 to 38,000 (see the story of Purves family in Waddington in this issue). By the 1820s, the county was a broad pasture dotted with 100,000 sheep, whose wool was sold to textile factories in New England. Judge Ford's Federalist Party disintegrated as a national force because the Democrats were viewed as the victorious war party and the Federalists were scorned as secessionist traitors.

Today, Canada's Conservative federal government, which promoted the war bicentennial in its campaign platform, will sponsor festivities in October 2012 and erect a new monument in Ottawa. Ontario is also gearing up for the commemoration.⁴⁰ For Canada, the war was the most acute crisis of the 19th century.⁴¹

In most of the U. S., there has been little talk of the coming anniversary. Bill Stewart notes that the War of 1812 is a small event in the U.S. in comparison to the Civil War, whose 150th anniversary dominates the discourse these days. After all, the Civil War's political and human costs were enormous, whereas fewer Americans died in all battles of the War of 1812 than died in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Maryland is budgeting \$25 million for commemoration of the War of 1812, but the other states in which battles were fought—Louisiana, Michigan, and New York—have been reluctant to spend.

In New York, commemorative events will be mostly local, in Plattsburgh, Ogdensburg, and Sackets Harbor. DeKalb township has already held a program to remember its veterans. Three New York governors in a row vetoed funds for an 1812 bicentennial celebration, but as we go to press, the state legislature approved a token \$500,000 in the 2012 budget.⁴³ Michigan's governor also was skeptical: "I've never heard of two countries trying to figure out how to have a party over a war."⁴⁴

Just as well, perhaps, that we let matters rest. As Lord Wellington, the British hero of the Napoleonic Wars, wrote, "... next to a battle lost, the greatest misery is a battle gained ... I never wish for any more fighting."⁴⁵

* * *

Thanks to Jean Marie Martello, SLCHA Archives Manager, for finding documents and photos, to Bryan Thompson, DeKalb historian, for discovering the Harison papers in the NYS Historical Society Archives, to David Martin for sharing his digitized historical photos, and to Bill Stewart, Trent Trulock, and Jim Carl for reading this article and suggesting improvements.

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Waddington in the War of 1812

Susan Omohundro

While Ogdensburg was the focus of military activity in St. Lawrence County, the riverside community of Waddington remained mostly quiet. The Town of Waddington (then called Hamilton after Alexander Hamilton) was bought by Abraham Ogden in 1796. His sons David and Thomas inherited the tract in 1801. Their brother-in-law, Joshua Waddington, for whom the community was later named, became a co-proprietor in 1803. Like Judge Ford and David Parish, the Ogdens were Federalists, and wished to develop their property in peace. At the time of the war, brothers David and Gouverneur Ogden were in residence.

Letters written by Gouverneur reveal his fluctuating state of mind as the war unfolded. On October 30, 1812, he wrote to his mother:

We have now become familiar with the operations of War, and of course feel no great anxiety on that Score. The passing & repassing of Boats before our View affords us only amusement at Hamilton, while at Ogdensburgh & elsewhere they occasion fear in some, and trouble to many. The several Lessons our violent patriotic Gentlemen have received in their unauthorized attacks upon the British have cooled the ardour of many, and instilled into the Minds of all more Caution & prudence. . .

[I]t is impolitic in us by any act of aggression to expose ourselves to Retaliation. We therefore at Hamilton have been peaceable, that is, have not been fired upon by the Enemy. Conscious of our Weakness & inability, we have quietly permitted the immense quantities of supplies daily forwarded by the British to pass unmolested by us. David passed over to Head Quarters on the other side a few days since, and spent an Hour with

Col. Lethbridge under a flag of Truce. He intimated to David that nothing offensive would be undertaken by the British if our government (or rather Troops) did not molest them while in their own Waters.¹

Gouverneur Ogden wrote a more frank letter to his brother, Dr. Ludlow, on December 20.

...our prospects are gloomy, to me beyond Expression, for I no longer calculate on a peaceable Residence here the ensuing Spring & Summer, and where to find another puzzles me much.

Waddington had a small militia but lacked guns and ammunition. Thus Gouverneur could only hope that good relations with those across the river would continue. During the first half of 1813, he was the only proprietor in residence, David and family being in New York City.

Gouverneur must not have felt too discouraged about his prospects, because in 1813 he lavished attention on his estate on Ogden Island. He hired a French architect, Joseph-Jacques Ramée, to design the landscape around his mansion and to lay out a plan for the village on the mainland. Ogden clearly wished to avoid trouble and develop his domain (Figure 1).

To his brother Ludlow he wrote on September 24: "Their war in Canada is entirely a defensive one, and will be successful, too, as long as we [are] cursed with so many poor officers & so few good soldiers."

The Ogdens' conciliatory strategy almost came to grief at the last, when a group of Hamilton men pirated British bateaux that had been moored opposite Ogden Island. The boats contained food, liquor and household goods, not war materiel. A small contingent of British soldiers, led by Colonel Joseph Morrison, arrived on November 12, 1813. The British were in pursuit of Wilkinson after his defeat at Chrysler's Farm. The local militia, led by Captain Bester Pierce of Potsdam, offered little

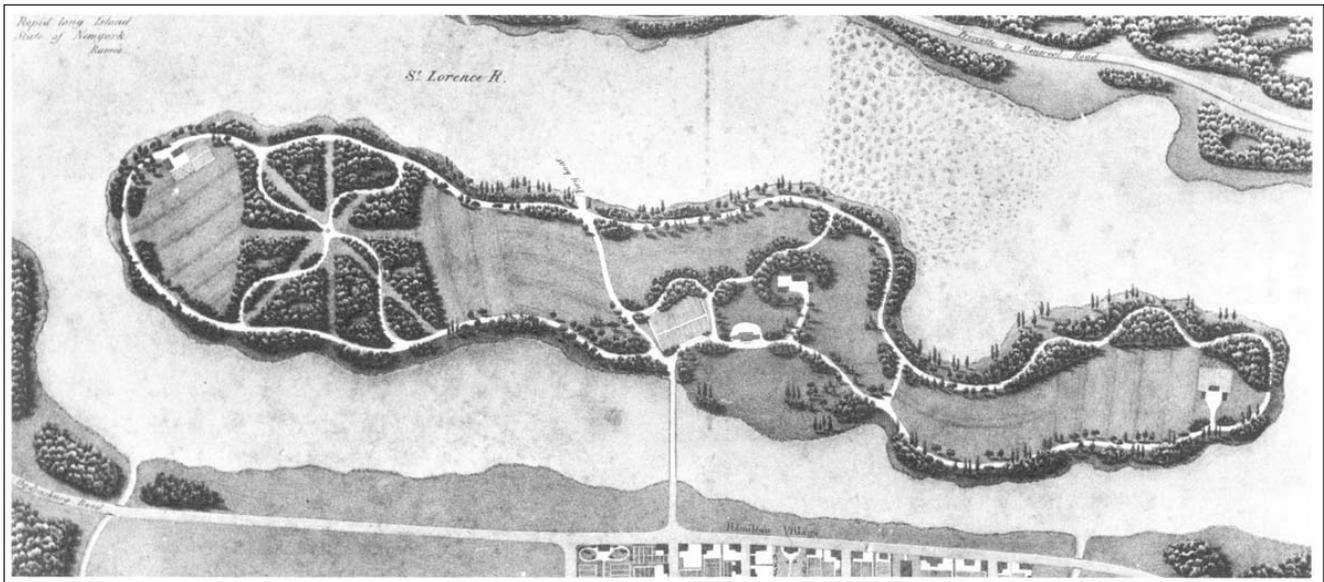


FIGURE 1: Architect Joseph Jacques Ramée's plans for Ogden Island and Village of Hamilton (Waddington), drawn up for Gouverneur Ogden in 1813. Photo from Schaffer Library, Union College, Schenectady.

resistance. The British planned to burn down the warehouse the goods were stored in, but David Ogden promised to return the merchandise and the boats.

The British provided a receipt for "property given up to the enemy as stipulated by D. A. Ogden & A. Richards, Esquires, upon the Capitulation of the Village of "Hamilton" [Waddington] in the town of Madrid." The author of the receipt, Jacob Weegar, appears to have been a civilian agent for Captain Pearson, "Col. Commdt of his Britannic Majesty's Tories, in this District." (Pearson was commander of Fort Wellington.) Weegar does demur that the goods "are not examined by me in consequence of my not having an opportunity or leisure to examine the same at the present."

The manuscript lists every returned item, along with the two boats and a scow that carried them. The items included 13 barrels, hogsheads, or kegs of spirits, wine, shrub, brandy, or whiskey; 16 barrels of sugar; 15 barrels, bags, or boxes of "contents unknown"; plus some cooking pots, hardware, soap, snuff, raisins, stoves, glassware, wrapping paper and cords.²

The Ogdens must have felt relatively secure after this exchange, because David Ogden and his family moved into his home, Island House, by early 1814. And in fact calm prevailed during the following months. Yet, when news of the Treaty of

Ghent arrived in early 1815, no doubt the Ogdens and other local inhabitants breathed a sigh of relief at the declaration ending the war.

Postwar growth

Waddington prospered after the war. In 1817, David Ogden was elected to Congress, and President Monroe visited Waddington and Ogdensburg, indicating the reconciliation of the Federalist gentry with the Democrat-Republicans, the dominant political party.

Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, people expected a period of prosperity after the conclusion of hostilities in North America and Europe. Many found their expectations unfulfilled, seeing high taxes, low demand for goods, and high unemployment. Some decided to emigrate to the U.S. The following account was written by a family that came to St. Lawrence County in 1819.

In "Narrative of Thomas and Mary Purves Giving an Account of what happened to them and their Children During their Voyage from Scotland to America," the Purves begin their account by making it clear they were driven from home by poverty and sought a better life in northern New York.³ Their voyage took them to Quebec. They then took a steamer to Montreal. The narrative continues:

We lodged with Will Lauder [a previous immigrant] from Dunes, Berwick Shire. Provisions were very cheap here but little employment. The place abounded with apples. Tuesday, 28th [September] we proceeded to LaChean [LaChine] which is nine miles of land where we remained till Saturday morning when we sailed in a Yankee boat for Ogdensburg where we arrived on the 14th of October and where we got free quarters in Mr. Parish's store. I applied to Mr. Parish's agent to see what encouragement he would give us to go to Rossie. I told him my circumstances and the state of my family. I got a very cold reception. He told me there were too many of my kind there already and that it was needless for us to go to Rossie.

I was then at my wits' end and knew not what to do. Three of my children sick and unable to care for themselves, our provisions almost gone and our little money reduced to 18 shillings and no work and a number of hardships of which we were not acquainted.

But the goodness of Almighty God endureth ever still! That day I went to a Mr. Bell in Ogdensburg, a country man of mine, and told him my case. He said he would take me to Mr. Gouverneur Ogden of Waddington, (who was in town at court), next day and he thought he would help me.

. . . After a sleepless night of prayer . . .

On the morning Mr. Bell took me to Mr. Ogden and represented our case to him. He readily told us that if we chose to go to Waddington, he would pay our passage down the river and we might settle in any place of the town that we chose and he would get a house for us and give us provisions till we could raise them for ourselves. I gladly accepted his offer.

He came along with us and visited my family and ordered a surgeon to visit my children and told me to go to Mr. Parish's house and get what provisions we wanted ... and come down with the first boat we could get that would carry us to Waddington. Our prospects began to look a little brighter and we got new grounds to bless God for all his goodness to us.

We, accordingly, on Tuesday following got a boat to carry us down the river to Waddington, which place we reached next day being the 20th of October, just seventeen weeks and three days from the time we left Angelrow.

Mr. Ogden and Mrs. Ogden showed us great kindness and like good Christians performed every part of their engagement. Our children soon recovered. I entered to work next day and continued in his employ for some time.

Gouverneur Ogden was indeed actively soliciting settlers. In 1819 he printed a handbill headed "Lands for Sale On the River St. Lawrence."⁴ In it he claimed that Waddington had 400 families, with "most of the conveniences and advantages of an old settled country." He particularly noted the churches.

These Lands are generally of the first quality, the climate is healthy, and Montreal furnishes a good, easy and convenient market for all their products. The price of unimproved lands will be continued the ensuing year at 5 dollars per acre, upon a credit of three, five, and seven years, interest being paid annually. About two thirds of the tract is already settled. There are several improved Farms for sale in the vicinity of the village, elegantly situated upon the bank of the river St. Lawrence, which would be an object to men possessed of moderate property. They might be purchased at from ten to fifteen dollars per acre, according to their improvements. Persons emigrating to these lands from Europe, should come out early in the spring, by way of Quebec: they will in that case be enabled during the summer to raise their potatoes and other vegetables for winter use, and to sow their fall crops. The usual price of a passage from England, Scotland or Ireland to Quebec, is six guineas for grown persons, and half that price for children. From Quebec to Montreal, in the steam-boat, the passage is two dollars, and half price for children; and from thence (a person finding his own provisions) may proceed by water to the village of Waddington for the additional sum of two dollars.

Persons desirous of purchasing or settling upon these Lands, may apply to David A. Ogden, one of the Proprietors, residing opposite the said village, or to the subscriber, residing in the same village. Gouverneur Ogden.

N.B. For more particular information, persons upon their arrival at Montreal, may apply to Charles L. Ogden, Commission Merchant resident there, who will recommend good Boatmen, etc.

David Parish and Gouverneur's brother Charles L. Ogden are identified as land agents for the parcels. The handbill concludes with a lengthy list of names of subscribers who corroborate Ogden's statements. The largest number are from parishes in Scotland, but many are from Ireland and England. Potential settlers could look

for the names of people they knew or at least be reassured of the presence of a substantial number of countrymen.

And so, in the end, the War of 1812 proved no more than a minor setback for the growth of Waddington.

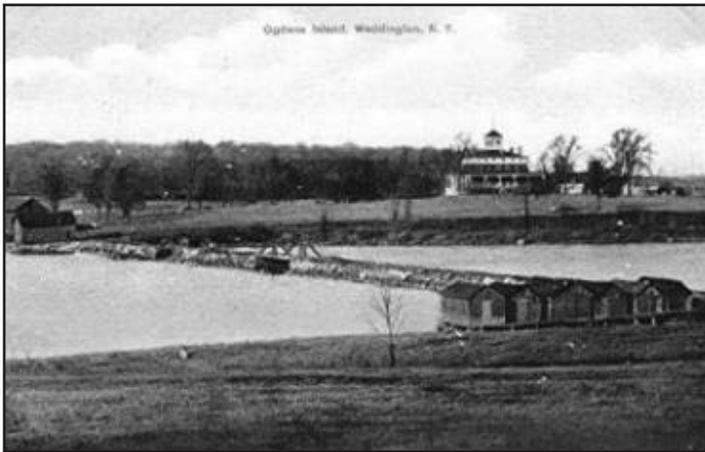
Notes

1 Quotations of Ogden family members are from the Ogden family papers, SLCHA Archives.

2 A photocopy of this manuscript receipt is in the SLCHA Archives.

3 On file in SLCHA Archives

4 On file in SLCHA Archives



Ogden Island connected to Waddington over the St. Lawrence River by causeway. The Ogden mansion is upper right. Postcard about 1900, from www.waddington.northcountryny.com/

Ogden Island across the St. Lawrence River in 2012, as seen from Waddington. Cows graze where buildings once stood. Photo by Alison Charles.



A Uniform Coat from the War of 1812

John and Susan Omohundro

In 1959 the Potsdam Village Museum was given a soldier's uniform coat that by all indications was part of a militia uniform worn in the War of 1812.

The donor reported that the coat was worn by Shubel Clark of Canton, who was drafted in June, 1812, at the war's outset, and served as a private in a company of detached militia at Ogdensburg. Shubel probably defended the city from the British raid in February, 1813, as described earlier in this issue.

The uniform came to light again recently when the museum was inventorying its collection. Bill Davidson of Potsdam, a re-enactor and scholar of military uniforms, assisted museum staff in showing the coat to Joseph Thatcher, a textile specialist with the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Thatcher confirmed that the coat was cut and decorated in ways appropriate for the time. He noted the fine quality of the wool, which is probably of English manufacture. Even though the edges of the jacket are unfinished, there has been very little fraying.

There is no evidence that Private Clark ever achieved such rank, so we're not sure how he acquired the coat. *Military Uniforms in America*, Vol. 2 (John Elting, Presidio Press, 1978) states that New York militia infantry regiments at this time consisted mostly of "enrolled" militiamen without uniforms, so if Private Clark wore this jacket, it is more likely that he was in artillery. The longer coattails support this idea.

The Militia Act of 1809, in effect during the war, stipulated that officers' coats have white linings, which this one does not. On the other hand, the false button holes on the back are embroidered in twisted gold thread, the mark of an officer, whereas a regular's uniform would only have had worsted tape sewn on to highlight button holes.

The coat was carefully mended and well tended by its original wearer—whoever that was—and his successors, and it remains in good condition after 200 years.

We thank the staff of Potsdam Village Museum for assisting us to take these photos and sharing their research on this coat.



LEFT: The coat is of dark blue wool with red collar and cuffs. It retains its original set of eight brass buttons at the lapel and four buttons at each cuff. RIGHT: The tails are turned back and “pinned” with diamond-shaped embellishments, a characteristic decoration of the time. American uniforms during the war tended to copy French styles. The shoulders are narrow; the coat’s wearer was a small man.

The Robert C. McEwen U. S. Custom House in Ogdensburg

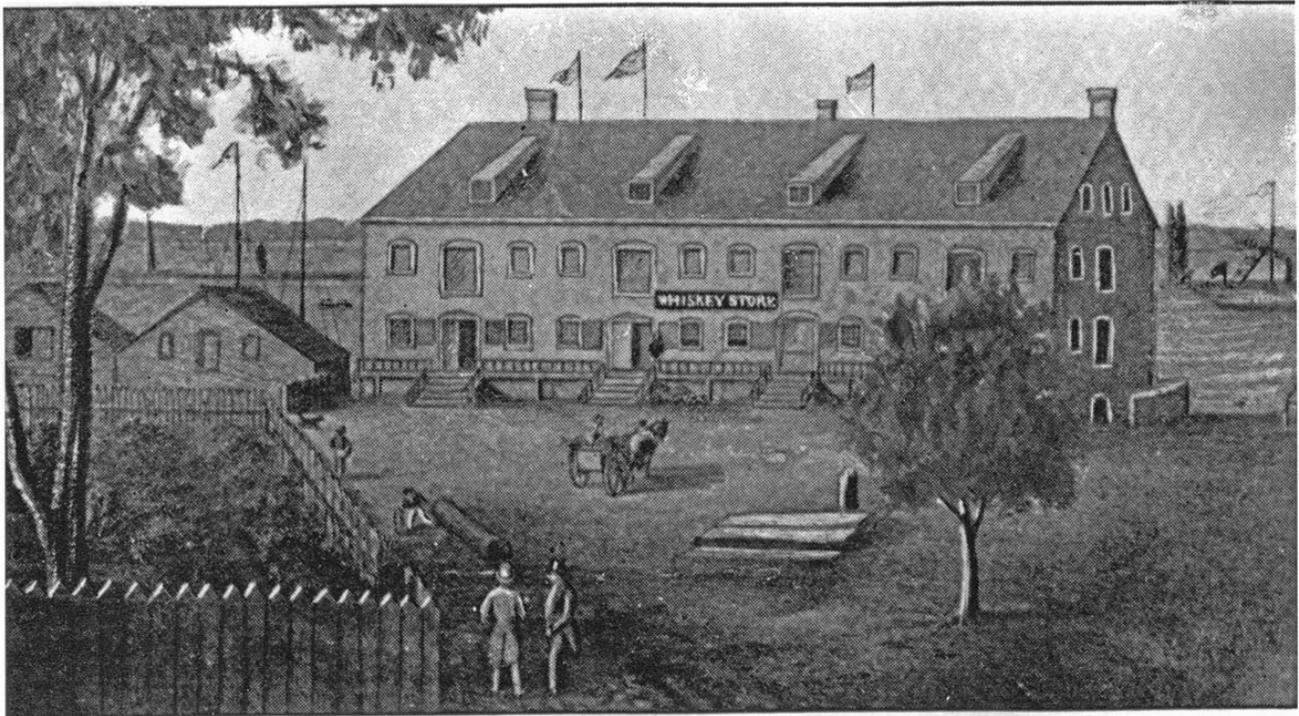
Susan Omohundro

In 1809 David Parish built a large warehouse and store near the mouth of the Oswegatchie River. This building aided his commercial enterprises along the St. Lawrence River and signaled the development of Ogdensburg.

The thick stone walls are constructed of native limestone. The building is 60 feet wide and 120 feet long. Three inside stone cross-walls divide its length into four equal bays. The

building is 3 stories high with a dormered attic. Masonry openings are spanned with arches trimmed with voussoirs (segmented stones), but this was intended as a plain, utilitarian building.

Most of the workmen were from Montreal. They were supervised by Daniel Church, who also built Parish's house (now the Remington Museum).



Early nineteenth century lithograph of Parish's "Whiskey Store." From P. S Garand, The History of the City of Ogdensburg (1927).



Contemporary photo of McEwen Custom House. Photo by John Omohundro

The building survived the War of 1812 with minimal damage. It continued in use throughout the 19th century and into the 20th. Until 1870 the U.S. Customs Office occupied part of the building. The George Hall Corporation bought it in 1880 and used it as their base of operations for shipping on the St. Lawrence River. The U.S. government began renting space in 1928 and purchased the building in 1937 for use as customs headquarters.

When the federal government acquired the building it was remodeled and given Colonial Revival flourishes. The large warehouse loading door openings were replaced with paired windows. The dormers were replaced in a new style when the metal roof was put on. The front portico was

added. The window sashes were replaced, and the shutters removed. Interior remodeling has covered the original wood beams and floors.

Although much has changed, Parish's store presents an appearance similar to its original form, and its historical significance is large. It was listed on the National Register in 1974 and named for former congressman Robert McEwen in 1982.

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