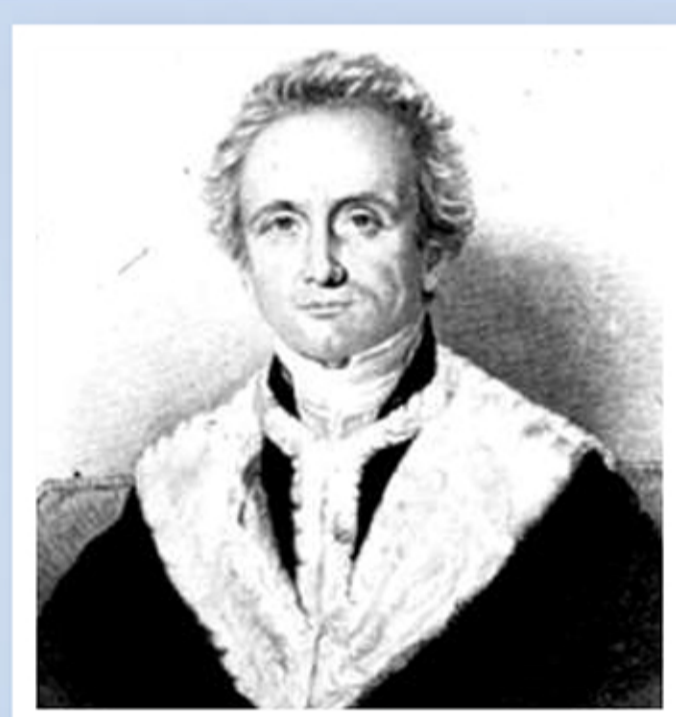


IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT

Although formally at war, the allegiances within Upper Canada and the United States did not align as neatly as the borders implied. In fact, some forty percent of Upper Canada's citizen-soldiers were loyal not to Britain, but to the Americans. As a result, acts of treason and desertion were relatively common. Although dealt with swiftly by General Sir Isaac Brock, the Commander of the British forces in Canada—and to a more severe extent by Brock's successor Gordon Drummond—incidents of treason persisted.

Names like Mallory, Willcocks or Phelps are often associated with those who were caught on the wrong side of the border. When war erupted, these men and others openly supported American efforts.



◀ John Beverley Robinson, Attorney General during most of the War of 1812. He was also the lead prosecutor in the High Treason trials at Ancaster. On November 13, of 1813 the Norfolk militia captured 19 American marauders at the Battle of Nanticoke. The American prisoners were sent for trial in the Ancaster court and on May 23 of 1814, all were charged with high treason. As a consequence, Dayton Lindsey, Noah Payne Hopkins, John Dunham, Aaron Stevens, Benjamin Simmons, George Peacock Jr., Isaiah Brink, and Adam Crysler were executed by hanging in July of 1814 at Burlington Heights. All of the remaining 11 prisoners were sentenced to exile. Captain William Francis was one of the witnesses for the Crown who testified against the accused; he was later murdered in his home at Selkirk in an act of revenge because of his testimony.

John B. Robinson, Archives of Ontario Art Collection (Ref.: C281-0-0-143)



▲ The Shawnee Nation sided with the British as early as in the mid 1700s, an alliance that lasted until well after the War of 1812. They soon earned a reputation as allies that were resourceful, skilled and—with a mixture of traditional skills and modern weapons—were able to use the natural environment to their advantage.

Shawnee Warrior, Fine Art Print (Randy Steele: randy-steele.artistwebsites.com)

Travelling north from Pennsylvania and other American regions, the sturdy Conestoga wagon was invaluable to Mennonite families seeking safe haven in Upper Canada.



◀ Tecumseh's personal pistol.



▶ Flint lock pistols supplied to volunteers who served with the British forces during the War of 1812 under the Indian Contract.



▶ Mennonites in this era faced severe hardships that included loss of wagons and other equipment to the British Troops. Still, they remained committed to keeping "a peace tradition", even though it would have been financially advantageous to be full participants in the 3-year War of 1812. Not surprisingly, area Mennonites—being excellent farmers—supplied food to all those in need throughout the conflict.

Recent restoration of a Conestoga wagon. Image Courtesy of Waterloo Region Museum



◀ During the War of 1812, the Village of Burford—west of Brantford—was strategically located on the military highway between Niagara and Detroit. It was an important stop in the interior; detachments of various military corps were frequently directed to concentrate on Detroit in the late summer of 1813, Burford became the assembly point for Proctor's army. Here came a large assembly of Wyandote, Delaware, Moravian, Munsey, Chippewa, Huron, Sauke, as well as Musquakie and Shawanee with their wives and families—in all about 1,300 souls. The warriors of 1,000 fighting men had been induced by Gen. Proctor to follow him in his retreat from Detroit, on the assurance that once under the guns of a mythical fort on the Thames River, their families would be safe. The retreat of the refugees was in the hands of Lt-Col. Matthew Elliott, a distinguished officer and Superintendent of the Indian Department. On arriving at Burford, the Native Nations' families made camp on the north side of the roadway. Then, during October of 1813, Lt-Col. Elliott sent men back to Delaware to meet and escort the remainder of the Native Nations, some 700 in number. Once in position in Burford in March of 1814, the entire party—now numbering some 2,000—continued their retreat east to the Grand River and onwards to Burlington Bay.

Henry Proctor, Artwork by C. H. J. Forster (Courtesy Parks Canada)

