THE PATRIOT WAR AND THE FENIAN RAIDS: CASE STUDIES IN BORDER SECURITY ON THE U.S.-CANADA BORDER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

by

ROBERT M. GROCEMAN, MAJOR, USMC
B.S., Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri, 2002

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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This thesis examines the Patriot War (1837-1838) and Fenian Raids (1866-1871) within the context of Canadian development, Anglo-American relations, and the challenge of border security during the nineteenth century. The Patriot War and Fenian Raids are examined as case studies on the same border occurring roughly thirty years apart. The development of Canadian identity and institutions directly affected the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, which developed considerably between 1837 and 1871. The development of this relationship, particularly after the War of 1812, was the product of significant diplomatic effort. In addition to diplomacy, the U.S. Army was also employed to enforce American neutrality and to deter or capture filibusters in the United States and Canada. Developing into a more professional force during this time period, the Army helped secure America's frontiers while handling conflicts with Native Americans and developing internal improvements. Ultimately, both the Patriots and Fenians failed due to internal factors within each organization, the Anglo-American relationship, and the actions of the U.S. Army.

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Name of Candidate: Major Robert Michael Groceman

Thesis Title: The Patriot War and the Fenian Raids: Case Studies in Border Security on the U.S.-Canada Border in the Nineteenth Century

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Ethan S. Rafuse, Ph.D.

_____, Member
James B. Martin, Ph.D.

_____, Member
LTC David J. Rapone, M.A.

Accepted this 9th day of June 2017 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Prisco R. Hernandez, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE PATRIOT WAR AND THE FENIAN RAIDS: CASE STUDIES IN BORDER SECURITY ON THE U.S.-CANADA BORDER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, by Major Robert M. Groceman, 111 pages.

This thesis examines the Patriot War (1837-1838) and Fenian Raids (1866-1871) within the context of Canadian development, Anglo-American relations, and the challenge of border security during the nineteenth century. The Patriot War and Fenian Raids are examined as case studies on the same border occurring roughly thirty years apart. The development of Canadian identity and institutions directly affected the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, which developed considerably between 1837 and 1871. The development of this relationship, particularly after the War of 1812, was the product of significant diplomatic effort.

In addition to diplomacy, the U.S. Army was also employed to enforce American neutrality and to deter or capture filibusters in the United States and Canada. Developing into a more professional force during this time period, the Army helped secure America's frontiers while handling conflicts with Native Americans and developing internal improvements.

Ultimately, both the Patriots and Fenians failed due to internal factors within each organization, the Anglo-American relationship, and the actions of the U.S. Army.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The border between the United States and Canada is the longest demilitarized border in the world. As of the early twenty-first century, there is little hint of enmity across that border, and relations between the U.S. and Canadian governments have been characterized more by cooperation than competition. This relationship was built over two centuries and was not always so cordial. Much like the United States, Canada began as a collection of British colonies. After the American Revolution and the War of 1812, the United States, Canada, and Great Britain resolved to solve future conflicts diplomatically, rather than militarily. However, two events during the nineteenth century had the potential to jeopardize this policy: the Patriot War of 1837-1838 and the Fenian Raids of 1866-1871.

Countering British Rule

The Patriot War began as a few loosely related uprisings in response to perceived British misrule. The Patriots' goal was independence for Canada. After unsuccessful skirmishes with British troops, most of the prominent rebels, calling themselves "Patriots," fled to the United States where they were greeted warmly and celebrated as heroes. Their actions inspired a group of Americans who formed a secret society known as the Patriot Hunters or Hunters Lodges that were spread along the U.S.-Canada border, from Vermont to Michigan. After another series of unsuccessful attacks, the Patriots and Hunters failed to defeat the British or inspire the larger Canadian population to fight for their independence. Additionally, by planning and launching these attacks from American

soil, the Patriots also attracted the attention and ire of the U.S government and Army, which sought to remain neutral in the conflict.[1]

Nearly thirty years later, the U.S.-Canada border was again the scene of conflict during the Fenian Raids. Similar to the Patriots, the Fenian Raids found their roots in dissatisfaction with British rule. However, the Fenians fought for Irish independence. Among the droves of Irish immigrating to the United States in the early to mid-nineteenth century, a group established an organization known as the Fenian Brotherhood in 1858. The Fenian Brotherhood's original aim was to fund and support a rebellion in Ireland. However, after several years of inaction and a resultant change in leadership, the group decided on a new, nearer target: British Canada. Much like the Patriots, the Fenians used the United States as a safe haven to conduct their planning, recruiting, and preparations for attacks on Canada. Again, the United States sought neutrality, especially after four long years of civil war.[2]

Ultimately, these two efforts were both unsuccessful and relatively small. Consequently, they both fell into relative American historical obscurity. However, examination of their causes, successes, failures, and outcomes can provide better understanding of more modern issues involving border security. In both the Patriot War and Fenian Raids, the U.S. soil was used as a safe haven, resulting in the involvement of the U.S. Army. This use of a border as a safe haven has occurred in many conflicts throughout history, some of which are fairly recent. For example, during the Iraq War (2003-present), Shiite militias received support from Iran. During both the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) and the Afghanistan War (2001-present), the mujaheddin and Taliban used the Afghan-Pakistan border as a safe haven in support of their fight against the

Soviet Union and United States, respectively. During the Vietnam Conflict, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong used Laos and Cambodia to their advantage against the United States.[3] While a full examination of each of these examples is beyond the scope of this thesis, they help to illuminate the role that borders can play, particularly dealing with transnational problems.

The Challenge of Border Security

The challenge of border security was evident in both the Patriot War and Fenian Raids. Border security has often been a challenge, and different cultures have addressed the problem differently based on their specific circumstances. Irregular forces often take advantage of unsecured borders, some methods of which are included in a framework known as fortified compound warfare. Thomas Huber defines compound warfare as "the simultaneous use of a regular or main force and an irregular or guerrilla force against an enemy."[4] Furthermore, he defines "fortified" compound warfare as the protection of the main force by physical, technological, or other means to prevent its destruction.[5] He describes the use of a safe haven, along with an allied major power, as essential components to fortified compound warfare.[6]

A prominent example of the application of compound warfare is the Vietnam War. North Vietnam employed a regular force, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and an irregular force, the National Liberation Front (NLF), that operated out of South Vietnam. The PLA was protected from destruction by the border between North and South Vietnam, and the NLF took advantage of the porous, semi-governed borders along Cambodia and Laos, which served as an effective safe haven from which to launch attacks and ferry supplies. Additionally, North Vietnam received substantial support from

both China and the Soviet Union.[7] In turn, border security has been a significant issue for the United States since its establishment. The current *National Security Strategy* does not specifically address border security, but it does briefly mention the importance of securing the borders, noting that, "our obligations do not end at our borders."[8] Indeed, according to author Sylvia Longmire, the current policy of the United States involves throwing billions of dollars at the problem of border security while security professionals throughout government cannot agree on a single definition of what a secure border is.[9] The election of 2016 brought border security issues to the forefront, and the aggressive policies already enacted by the new administration may be an indication of the explicit mention of border security in a forthcoming *National Security Strategy* currently pending publication. Whether for expansion or for security purposes, for more than a century the United States fought a series of wars and entered into a series of treaties and agreements that contributed to the expansion, definition, and security of its borders.

The early United States expanded westward, but not northward. After the conclusion of the War of 1812, the United States no longer looked to expand its northern border by force. Consequently, all disputes with Great Britain regarding Canada were settled diplomatically. This was a notable development because the exact location of America's northern border was not fixed until 1846. This area of blurred sovereignty provided the Patriots with a place to operate. Even after the border was determined, the actions of armed groups such as the Patriots and Fenians attempting to foment rebellion tested the U.S. and British response and the military role in border security.

The Patriots and Fenians, like many belligerents in border conflicts, used fortified compound warfare but did so incompletely. They used the United States as a safe haven,

and attempted to launch irregular attacks from there, using the border to protect their main force. However, neither of them received support from a great power as defined by Huber, nor were they able to generate a regular force.[10] The subsequent movement of U.S. and British armed forces along the border had the possibility to ignite a war.

Historiography

In comparison to many other historical events of the period, not much is written about the Patriots. Historian Andrew Bonthius laments the lack of writing on the Patriot War as a "nagging gap in the historiography of the U.S. and U.S.-Canada/British relations."[11] Despite this gap, what has been written is valuable. In his study, Bonthius analyzes the movement and the actions taken by the U.S. and British governments to prevent war within the context of the American radical democratic movement of Locofocoism. Locofocoism was an anti-banking political offshoot of Jacksonianism that gained prominence in the 1830s, particularly in the Great Lakes region. Set in the background of this class struggle, he concludes that most U.S. historians have over-emphasized the experiences of the upper class Canadians and ignored the lower classes.[12] Shaun McLaughlin provides a comprehensive look at the chronology of the Patriot War along the Canadian border with New York and Michigan, in a two-volume work. Despite the failure of the Patriot uprisings, he concludes that they resulted in substantial changes to the provincial governments in Canada.[13] Samuel Watson, in contrast, examines the U.S. Army officer corps and their actions along the border during the Patriot War. He provides a perspective of the conflict from the American point of view, detailing the relationship between the civilian government in Washington, the U.S. troops stationed along the Canadian border, the state and local governments, and the population living in

the area.[14] In 1896, David Read wrote a lengthy history of the Patriot War, with a significant amount of background information that set the scene for the rebellion.[15] Orrin Tiffany, in his 1905 Ph.D. dissertation, described the relationships among the Canadian rebels, the citizens living along the border, the Van Buren Administration, and the governments of the border states. He showed how segments of the American population aimed to initiate a war between the United States and Canada in their objective of earning Canadian independence and permanently removing British influence from North America.[16]

Other authors have focused on the Canadian and British perspectives. In *A Particular Duty: The Canadian Rebellions, 1837-1839*, Michael Mann provides an account of the Patriot War from the viewpoint of the British military. He attempts to fill what is a sizable gap in British historiography on the subject, and his study provides information on the experiences and decision-making of the British regulars who were instrumental in suppressing the Patriots north of the border.[17] Similarly, Albert DeCelles describes the conflict in Lower Canada (Quebec) from a French-Canadian perspective. He highlights the attitudes of the British Canadians and the French Canadians toward each other and the actions of the Canadian government to quell the rebellion. This study looks at the events of 1837 in the context of the divisions among Canadian society: British, Irish, and French.[18]

Other authors have examined the Patriot War in the context of Anglo-American relations. Albert Corey describes the often-troubled relations between the United States and Canada during the early nineteenth century. He examines how the two governments avoided armed conflict while suppressing insurgent activity along the border and

addressing the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute, which was resolved by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842.[19] Howard Jones expands on this in his examination of Anglo-American relations from 1783 through the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.[20] Finally, Kenneth Stevens studies the influence of specific events during the Patriot War on Anglo-American relations.[21]

While the Fenian Raids have received more attention than the Patriot War, they are by no means well known, and the historiography more often frames their actions in the wider scope of the struggle in Ireland, the Irish diaspora, and Anglo-American relations.[22] David Sim examines the efforts by Irish-Americans in 1848-1871 to affect U.S. policy. As the Fenians tested American neutrality, he describes how Irish-Americans were used as political fodder by U.S. politicians.[23] David Doolin discusses the transnational nature of the Fenians and their development within the United States as a product of Irish-American identity in his work.[24] Patrick Steward and Brian P. McGovern provide a more comprehensive history of the Fenians and their struggle for Irish independence between 1858 and 1871. They discuss the spread of the idea and the factors which ultimately prevented Irish independence during this time.[25]

Very few sources link both the Patriot War and the Fenian Raids. Orrin Tiffany's work contains one line that links the two events, calling the Fenians raider the "legitimate successor" to the Patriot Hunter.[26] Robert W. Coakley examines both the Patriot War and Fenian Raids in relative detail in the context of the role of the U.S. Army in all domestic disorders from the late 1780s until the 1870s. He links the two only by noting, "[President Andrew] Johnson was faced with a situation similar to that [President Martin] Van Buren had confronted in 1837, and he adopted in the end a policy similar to Van

Buren, benefitting from the law passed at the latter's request permitting the use of armed forces to prevent filibustering expeditions."[27] While all of the above sources give great insight into the Patriot War and Fenian Raids, they do so treating each as single events. They do not address the commonalities of these two events and how they shaped U.S.-Canada relations, nor are they informed by modern literature and discussion of the problems of border security.

Most of the contemporary literature regarding U.S. border security involves the U.S.-Mexico border. However, by seeking the general principles of border security, this is applicable to the study of the Patriot War and Fenian Raids. Joseph Nevins studies U.S. border security policy and Operation Gatekeeper, a U.S. border security program conducted on the Mexican border from the 1970s through the 1990s. He focuses more on the socio-economic reasons for illegal immigration and has a tendency to downplay the threat posed by criminal elements and drug trafficking. Nevertheless, the book explores the challenges and limited success of modern border security.[28]

Authors Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey explore the history of the U.S.-Mexico border and effect of economic factors, social factors, and Mexican-American relations on the border. They describe the border in the late 1800s as "a vaguely defined territory in which sparse populations, separated by an international boundary, came into uncertain contact." This is certainly true of the U.S.-Canada border in the first half of the nineteenth century.[29]

Sylvia Longmire examines modern threats at U.S. borders, material solutions for border security, and border security policies, primarily emphasizing the U.S.-Mexico border. She argues that much of U.S. border security is expensive and ineffective, not

necessarily because of lack of material solutions, but because of inadequate policy and ineffective government agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security. She does note, however, that the U.S.-Canada border is more secure due in part to the positive relationship between the United States and Canada.[30]

Case Studies of Border Security Along the U.S.-Canada Border

The Patriot War and Fenian Raids serve as two examples of unsuccessful uprisings that provide insights of contemporary relevance. Additionally, because these events occurred along the same border only a few decades apart, they are fascinating case studies. Notably, the relationship between the United States and Great Britain developed considerably between 1837 and 1871. Each nation was devoted to peace, despite numerous significant disputes. Though the War of 1812 was the last time the two nations fought each other, preventing another war required significant diplomatic effort.

In addition to diplomacy, the military was also employed to enforce neutrality and to thwart filibusters, fighters operating across the U.S.-Canada border without the backing of either country. In 1837, despite efforts to focus on conventional war, the U.S. Army was primarily a constabulary force whose mission was to secure and expand America's frontiers while developing internal improvements and handling conflicts with Native Americans. Additionally, the northern border was ill-defined and sparsely populated. This resulted in a semi-governed or ungoverned space that enabled the flow of illicit goods and people that challenged the sovereign power of the United States—a borderland similar in some respects to the modern U.S. border with Mexico. The northern border east of the Rocky Mountains remained contested to some degree until the

Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842.[31] The Fenians dealt with a very different geographical and political reality as a result of this treaty, the U.S. Civil War, and the continued development of the U.S. Army after 1838. The Civil War brought about significant changes in the Army, and many of the Fenians themselves were veterans of the war. As a result, the Fenians attempted to take advantage of the semi-governed border and leverage some of their combat experience to further their cause of an independent Ireland.[32]

This thesis examines the events of the Patriot War and the Fenian Raids through the lens of border security. What political, social, and economic factors led to the development and failure of the Patriot War and the Fenian Raids? What actions did the U.S. and Canadian armed forces take to control the violence and maintain the border? Chapter 2 provides a history of the Patriot War and examines the U.S. Army from 1815 to 1837 and its role in executing America's commitment to neutrality. Chapter 3 explores the Fenian Raids and how they were dealt with from a military perspective. A recurring theme in these episodes is the test of American neutrality, the actions taken to enforce it, and the roles and missions of the U.S. Army. Finally, Chapter 4 provides a conclusion and discussion of the contemporary relevance of this topic.

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CHAPTER 2

THE PATRIOT WAR, 1837-1838

The challenge of U.S.-Canada border security in the nineteenth century developed within the context of evolving Anglo-American relations and internal dynamics in both countries. Internal tensions within the Canadian provinces and the United States bled across the border, necessitating the involvement of the U.S. government and the central government of Great Britain and the use of armed force. The rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada that took place in 1837 were the product of dissatisfaction with British colonial governance. Over the course of two centuries of development, institutions in Canada reflected those of both Great Britain and France while also addressing the specific challenges of North America. While the rebellions were related, their connection was loose. The causes were slightly different in each province, but the goal of liberation from imperial dominance was the same.

The rebellions were unsuccessful. A combination of factors denied the Patriots their goal, despite substantial support from American citizens. In order to understand the political and social context of these uprisings, it is necessary to examine the development of the British-Canadian government, its relationship with the United States, and the challenge of border security.

European Expansion in Canada, 1603-1763

The history of Canada is interesting and complex. Historian Scott W. See characterizes it as a “tale of survival,” due to the harsh climate, varied terrain and the tension caused by its political status of being an imperial possession in a time of

revolution that affected Europe's colonial powers. He further contends that while its history lends itself to a worthwhile comparison to the United States, it is also rich enough to be appreciated on its own merits.[1] Indeed, Canadian history developed in parallel with its southern neighbor. Its evolution from scattered settlements to a collection of colonies and finally into an independent nation is an intrinsic part of North American history and had a considerable influence on the development of the United States.

After a series of exploratory voyages in the sixteenth century, led by fishermen, fur trappers, and adventurers such as John Cabot and Jacques Cartier, the first permanent European colonies in what is today Canada were established in the early seventeenth century. Quebec was founded in 1608, followed by the settlement of Acadia in 1611.[2] In 1663, after more than fifty years of development, the French established an official colonial government, formally founding the province of New France. Authority in New France was derived directly from the French crown, and as the French government was non-representational headed by an absolute monarch, the colonial government consisted of crown-appointed officials. Even though there was no governing body reflecting the wishes of the setters, this arrangement was effective in maintaining order and facilitating the development of the colony, which was oriented around trading outposts along major rivers rather than large-scale settlements.[3]

An attractive incentive for French settlers to come to New France was the seigneurial system. This system was a method of parceling land to lords, or *seigneurs*, who then distributed it to *habitants* who worked the land under the *seigneur's* supervision. Similar in some ways to the feudal system of Europe, there were also some major differences. *Habitants* had more rights than French peasants. Rather than being tied

to the land, their work was contractual in nature. They were free to leave once the contract had been satisfied. Many moved west, finding work in the fur trade and expanding French territory and economy. Additionally, the *seigneurs* were not always from the upper class. As a result, the actual administration of the *seigneuries* varied greatly. Most settlers were attracted by a perception that better opportunities existed in New France although social mobility was still very limited.[4] Over time, the French settlers developed their own identity as *Canadiens*, exhibiting a greater sense of independence from their contemporaries in France.[5]

The Acadia settlement was the site of the first clash between France and Great Britain in the New World. In 1621, a group of Scottish settlers established the British colony of Nova Scotia, literally New Scotland, adjacent to Acadia.[6] Intermittent clashes between French and British settlers in the New World were both an extension of conflicts between Great Britain and France and were rooted in competition over the fur trade with Indians. This culminated in the Seven Years' War, also known as the French and Indian War.[7] Historian Scott W. See contends that due to the small size of the French population of New France compared to the British in North America, as well as the economic strength and superior navy of the British, the French could not possibly prevail in a prolonged struggle for North America.[8] The war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, by which Great Britain received all Canadian lands from France, an event that Canadian historians have named the Conquest.[9]

British Rule of Canada, 1763-1812

In 1763, Great Britain claimed sovereignty over North America from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River. North of the thirteen American colonies that would break away

in 1776 to form the United States, Canada consisted of Quebec (formerly New France), New Foundland, Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton Island. West of Quebec was Rupert's Land, a western frontier of natives and fur trappers.[10] With all of European-settled Canada firmly in British control, tensions inevitably arose between French-Canadians and their British government. The British hoped to eventually "anglicize" Quebec by diluting the *Canadiens* with the large-scale introduction of British settlers. In the short term, however, the British were intent on purging as much French influence from the government as they could. As staunch Protestants, the British prohibited Roman Catholics from occupying positions of authority, while the seigneurial system was abolished. While a lack of representation in government was no change for the average *habitant*, they did feel significant cultural tension with the British. The social and economic upheaval created by the loss of the seigneurial system compounded the problem.[11]

To this day, there is debate among Canadian historians concerning the consequences of the Conquest. Some see it as empowering the French Canadians who were eventually given a greater voice in government due to the impact of the more representative British political system. Others maintain that the British destroyed the society of New France. Historian See argues that there were two main consequences of the Conquest. First, it undoubtedly impressed upon French colonists the defeat of the *Canadiens*. Second, it also represented abandonment by the French. French nobility returned to France after the war, in essence leaving the former *habitants* to fend for themselves under the British.[12] To the French government, New France had never been a profitable colony, and after the war, it seems they were eager to put it behind them.[13]

Understanding these two points is key for understanding the later developments in Lower Canada that led to the Patriot War.

Figure 1. Upper and Lower Canada, 1807

Source: The New York Public Library, "A New Map of Upper and Lower Canada," accessed April 30, 2017, http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-b018-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

After a decade of experimentation, the British made significant decisions regarding Quebec. After the large number of British settlers to Quebec failed to materialize and as unrest grew in the thirteen colonies to the south, the British Parliament passed the Quebec Act of 1774. Designed to reduce friction between the government and the French-Canadians, this act increased the size of Quebec, incorporating profitable fur trading areas. It also reinstated the dormant seigneurial system and restored the place of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, which angered the Protestant English colonies to the south. Additionally, the act allowed upper class French-Canadians to be appointed members of the province's legislative council.[14] It seemed to work; Quebec did not join the American Revolution a few years later. The improvements brought about by the Quebec Act coupled with bad conduct by American soldiers during their brief occupation of Montreal in 1775. drove the *Canadiens* to ally themselves with the British during the American Revolution.[15]

The American Revolution brought significant social and political change to Canada. Loyalists surged into Canada during and after the war. These people settled throughout Canada but especially in Quebec and Nova Scotia, where they eventually formed their own province, New Brunswick, in 1784.[16] In 1791, The British Constitutional Act divided Quebec into Upper Canada (modern Ontario) and Lower Canada (modern Quebec). This split was along the Ottawa River, a geographic border that coincided neatly with a distinct cultural border. Upper Canada was predominantly English-speaking and culturally British, while Lower Canada was linguistically and culturally *Canadien*. The Constitutional Act also established a bicameral legislature in each province. The upper house, known as the Legislative Council, consisted of members

appointed by the crown, and a lower house, known as the House of Assembly, which consisted of elected members. As before, each province was headed by a lieutenant governor who was appointed by the crown.[17] These developments were aimed at uniting French Canada with British Canada. At first, they seemed to fulfill this aim, but it may have been more due to the events of the War of 1812 between the United States and Britain.[18]

U.S. Army Development and Anglo-American Relations Prior to the Patriot War

The Revolutionary War resulted in the independence of the original thirteen colonies as well as their dominion of the northwest territories. British-backed Native American tribes, including the great Shawnee chief Tecumseh, attacked and killed American settlers and soldiers as they encroached on Indian territory. As the American government grew angry with perceived British interference and their presence in U.S. territory, the British signed the Jay Treaty in 1795. In this treaty, the British agreed to evacuate all remaining forts and posts on U.S. soil and abandon their allied Native American tribes.[19] The Army was given a clear mission to guard the frontiers to the north, west, and south, as well as the coastal defense to the east; to enforce U.S. policy with Indians; to prevent settlement on public lands; and to serve as a cadre for Army expansion in case of major war.[20]

In the Army's role as a border constabulary force, it was not uncommon for officers to conduct politics and diplomacy in addition to more traditional military tasks. This was primarily due to the nature of the frontier constabulary mission itself. Army officers on the frontier were faced with myriad difficulties while far from their higher

headquarters. This situation and its complexity grew as the country did. For example, the Louisiana Purchase was initially governed by the Army. After civilian leadership assumed control of the territory, Army officers continued to serve in lower level administrative capacities within the territorial government.[21] The Army was also tasked with conducting relations and enforcing U.S. policy with Indians on the frontier. This mission sometimes led to conflict with the white population in the territories.[22]

In addition to guarding America's frontiers from external threats, the Army also had a domestic mission. The inability of the Confederation government to provide assistance in response to Shay's Rebellion of 1786-1787 highlighted the need for a federal force to have the authority to act in domestic unrest and disturbances, a controversial role that the Army ultimately assumed. Although they recognized the need for the federal government to enforce federal law domestically, most framers were against granting that ability to a standing army. Due to compromise, the language in the Constitution was vague and would be left to interpretation and argument later.[23]

In 1792, Congress passed the Calling Forth Act. Under this law, which was only to be effective for two years, the states retained control of its militia until called into federal service by the president with a judicial certificate, congressional approval, or at the request of the state government. After the Whiskey Rebellion, Congress permanently renewed the Calling Forth Act and modified it, making it easier for the president to call up the militia. The requirement for a judicial certificate was removed. After the Burr Conspiracy, Congress passed the Law of 1807, which authorized the federal government to use regular troops to enforce domestic law.[24]

Army doctrine during the period emphasized conventional operations against European-style armies. As a result, the unconventional nature of frontier constabulary and border security missions required Army officers to improvise and develop their own informal doctrine and methods. As the Army evolved into a more professional institution prior to the war of 1812, it also became better at this improvisation.[25]

In the years leading up to the War of 1812, the United States began to experience economic effects of the Napoleonic wars between Great Britain and France. Some U.S. merchant ships were seized by European powers, and Great Britain attempted to halt American trade with France. With a British naval blockade and the involuntary impressment of Americans into the service of the Royal Navy, President James Madison and others in Congress pushed for war, which was declared in 1812.[26] Some in the United States also saw this as an opportunity to expand into Canada as well as punish the British for their support of Tecumseh and the Northwest Indians.[27] Looking at the numbers—seven and a half million Americans against only half a million Canadians—this seemed to be an attainable goal. However, over two years of war, including intense fighting in Upper Canada, the United States gained no extra territory but did successfully defeat the British at the Battle of New Orleans and crushed Britain's Indian allies, removing an impediment to settling the border.[28] It is interesting to note that while Canadian militias and loyal natives participated in the war, most of the fighting on the Canadian side was done by British regulars from England and Ireland.[29]

Historian Desmond Morton contends that the War of 1812 served to unite the English and French-Canadians of Lower Canada, if only temporarily.[30] Kenneth Stevens echoes this, adding that there were numerous improvements made by the government

throughout Canada, notably the construction of better roads.[31] While Canada was still a confederation of colonies under British rule rather than a union, these events became a unifying force.

Historian Jon Latimer argues that the War of 1812 also brought together opposing factions within the United States. Prior to the war, significant disagreement between the two major parties, Democratic-Republicans and Federalists, was close to potentially splitting the country. However, the war presented a common enemy, and Americans emerged a more confident nation.[32]

The War of 1812 also provided the impetus for substantial Army reform.[33] The introduction of higher academic and disciplinary standards at the U.S. Military Academy and the implementation of the "cadre principle" in the early 1820s helped professionalize the Army. However, the core mission of the Army was to serve as a border constabulary force.[34]

The 1814 Treaty of Ghent ended the war and began a new period in British-American relations.[35] From that point on, the two nations would choose diplomacy over war to resolve future conflicts. However, there were still lingering disputes between the two nations. Avoiding future conflict would require significant diplomatic effort. It would also require the use of the military in a capacity outside of major warfare in light of its border security mission to prevent, rather than wage, war.

Although the United States claimed the War of 1812 as a victory over British tyranny and the destruction of the Northwest Indians, few U.S. war aims were immediately achieved. American borders remained the same as they were before the war, and there was no reduction of British naval vessels in the Great Lakes. Over the next few

years, the naval arms race that began during the War of 1812 continued in the Great Lakes. In order to de-escalate the situation, the United States and Great Britain sought a diplomatic solution, which produced the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817. This agreement placed significant limitations on the presence of naval forces in the Great Lakes.[36]

Additionally, there remained border disputes along Maine and New Brunswick and west of the Great Lakes. Both the United States and Great Britain were eager to tap the economic potential that lay westward. In order to prevent conflict over westward expansion, they entered into the Convention of 1818. Also known as the Treaty of Joint Occupation, this agreement established a period of peaceful coexistence in the Oregon Country (the Pacific Northwest extending up to the 54th parallel) without establishing a defined border for a period of ten years. It postponed territorial claims in a sparsely populated and unsurveyed area in order to allow settlement and trade in the region to continue. [37]

This convention can be seen as the first steps toward eliminating sources of conflict diplomatically. However, the agreement was a half measure. It postponed some territorial disputes to a future date while the two nations reaped the benefits in the meantime. There were economic opportunities in the Oregon Country. It was little explored and sparsely populated, meaning that in the foreseeable future, this land was big enough for both the United States and Great Britain. Nevertheless, in the decades that followed, territorial disputes, whether involving the Oregon Country or other areas of the border, were handled diplomatically even after occasional threats of force. The most glaring example was James K. Polk's 1844 presidential run on the "Fifty-Four-Forty or Fight" platform, which would claim most of modern day British Columbia as part of the

United States. Polk won the election, and tensions rose. However, with the United States facing hostilities with Mexico, Polk relented his Canadian rhetoric and agreed in 1846 with the establishment of the western border along the 49th parallel.[38] These diplomatic successes were achieved despite challenges that could have resulted in armed conflict. One such challenge was the Patriot War.

The Patriot War Begins

By the start of the nineteenth century, discontent was brewing among segments of the Canadian populations in the provinces of Lower Canada (modern Quebec) and Upper Canada (modern Ontario). Historian O. E. Tiffany contends that the issues in Upper Canada were largely the result of class inequality. Despite the crown's move toward a more representative colonial government in Canada, many subjects recognized the inferiority of the elected members of the House of Assembly relative to the more powerful, and crown-appointed, Legislative Council in each province.[39] As a result, a small, but vocal number of Canadians grew angry and disillusioned, believing that their views were not adequately represented. The lower house of the legislature, the House of Assembly, consisted of members directly elected by Canadian male property owners. However, the upper house of the legislature, known as the Legislative Council, consisted of titled nobility appointed by the crown and wielded the real power.[40]

In Upper Canada, power was exclusively wielded by the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council. Around 1812, the leaders of the colony's business, political, and religious elite combined to create what was known as the Family Compact. The Family Compact essentially ran the government. The Executive Council was appointed by the lieutenant governor based on recommendations by the legislature. The Family Compact

also employed various means of corruption, such as bribery and blackmail, to ensure its candidates were elected and appointed. As a consequence, discontent among the populace grew.[41]

In the decades leading up to the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada, a tempestuous and controversial individual named William Lyon Mackenzie rose to prominence in Toronto. He was the owner of a local newspaper known as *The Colonial Advocate*. Mackenzie was inspired by republicanism in the United States and harbored anger over the British Great Reform Act of 1832, which increased access to political participation through election reform in England and Wales, but not in the colonies. In 1835, Mackenzie published the "Seventh Report of Grievances," which stated Upper Canada's issues with Canadian and British governance, primarily advocating for elected and not appointed political positions.[42] Along with a number of reform-minded allies in the Upper Canadian House of Assembly, he aimed to influence public opinion against those that held power under the Family Compact and enable real reform to take place. Chafing at the Legislative Council's veto of any House of Assembly reform legislation, Mackenzie wasted no time in writing scathing opinion pieces in his newspaper.[43] Mackenzie's editorials whipped many Canadians into a fury while at the same time upsetting officials who were satisfied with the status quo. After his printing office was vandalized by Family Compact allies, he won damages at trial. However, the offenders received light punishments and were later rewarded by elite members of the community.[44] Mackenzie did succeed, though, in mobilizing a portion of the Upper Canadian population and would later find support among American citizens.

Lower Canada was grappling with similar issues, which were further exacerbated by cultural differences. This would lead Lower Canadian discontents to open the Patriot War. The bulk of the population in the region was predominantly of French origin, and this cultural background, paired with their Catholic faith, put them at odds with the Protestant British ruling elite. The so-called "war of races" exacerbated the chasm between the elected representatives of the people and the powerful Legislative Council.[45] Louis-Joseph Papineau, a long-serving member in his province's House of Assembly, was one of the leaders advocating reform in Lower Canada. In 1834, he published "Ninety-Two Resolutions," a compilation of grievances against British and Canadian governance. Thirty-four of the resolutions regarded making appointed positions elected ones. It became part of the charter of Lower Canadian republicanism and was quickly adopted by the House of Assembly.[46] Papineau protested these injustices initially through civil disobedience. He was among the five thousand that assembled illegally south of Montreal on 23 October 1837 to protest and push for reform. His actions resulted in treason charges for more than twenty leaders, including Papineau and Dr. Wolfred Nelson, a medical doctor and War of 1812 veteran. Papineau and Nelson responded by fleeing the authorities and resolving to make a more lasting statement.[47]

On the morning of 23 November 1837, Papineau and Nelson gathered about eight hundred men at Saint Charles and Saint Denis on the Richelieu River in Lower Canada and made preparations for armed action. The self-named Patriots at Saint Denis were attacked that same day by three hundred British regulars led by Colonel Charles Gore. Gore directed his men to open fire on the Patriots, drawing first blood in the Patriot War. Despite their relative inexperience and lack of training, the Patriots held out for the

remainder of the day, winning a significant moral victory. Gore withdrew when his men ran low on ammunition. Knowing that they would not be able to hold out when the British returned, the Patriots quickly disbanded and made their way across the border to Vermont. Gore returned a week later and Saint Denis surrendered to him without a fight.[48]

On 25 November, the Patriots at Saint Charles were attacked by Colonel George Weatherall and his 420 British troops. The Patriots at Saint Charles did not fare as well as their compatriots at Saint Denis. Of the 60 to 80 Patriots who fought, 56 of them were killed.[49]

In early December 1837, inspired by the rebellion in Lower Canada, Mackenzie organized between seven hundred and eight hundred rebels from rural areas and marched on Toronto with the intent to fight for independence from Great Britain. The lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head, did not seriously heed warnings from militia commander Lieutenant Colonel James FitzGibbon. He refused permission to prepare a defense of Toronto in the absence of the British regulars that had moved out in response to the problems in Lower Canada. FitzGibbon wisely made preparations anyway.[50] On 4 December, the Patriots barricaded themselves in a tavern a few miles north of Toronto where they prepared to launch attacks on the city. The next day, they moved south. However, once fired upon by Canadian militiamen, they broke contact and returned to the tavern. On 7 December, the loyalist militia marched in force on the tavern under the direction of Colonel Allan MacNab. They quickly overpowered the Patriots who then fled to the United States.[51]

On 11 December, Mackenzie personally appeared in Buffalo, New York. There he was welcomed as a hero and provided shelter by Dr. Cyrenius Chapin, an influential Anglophobic Buffalo native who had fought against and was captured by the British during the War of 1812. Local newspapers in the United States sensationalized the story of the Canadian Patriots, attributing exaggerated or invented heroics to them and presenting them as defenders of freedom. Coupled with the widespread anti-British sentiment in the United States, these stories stirred many to action, enabling Chapin to recruit a number of men to fight.[52]

Chapin and Mackenzie thus formed plans for an invasion of Canada, along with newly recruited leadership consisting of Thomas Jefferson Sutherland, Dr. John Rolph, and Rensselaer Van Rensselaer. Sutherland was an American who had experience in the U.S. Marine Corps in the 1820s. He ran an anti-Masonic Democratic newspaper in Troy, New York, until 1834 when it went out of business. Rolph was a doctor, Toronto alderman, and former member of the Legislative Council who was sympathetic to the Patriot Cause. He intended to become active in an independent Canadian government. Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, a member of a prominent New York family, was appointed as the Patriots' leader. Van Rensselaer came to the Patriot cause with a distinguished pedigree, one that he was eager to live up to. Van Rensselaer's father, Solomon, was a Revolutionary War hero, and the family included several members who played important and well-known roles in the War of 1812 along the Niagara frontier. Despite a lack of military experience, Van Rensselaer brought significant name recognition to the effort. His appointment as leader, however, proved later to be troublesome for the Patriots. The Patriots' plan was to occupy Navy Island, located in the Niagara River and belonging to

Upper Canada. Once on the island, the Patriots would declare an independent and free Canadian government and hoped to spark a wider rebellion throughout Canada with American assistance.[53]

This plan, however, had a fatal weakness. While the political or strategic objective was an independent Canada, the Patriots' tactical actions were insufficient to bring about this goal. In modern U.S. doctrine, the link between the strategic and tactical levels of war is known as the operational level of war. Often the operational level of war is described using the concepts of ends, ways, and means. The end or ends is the ultimate goal of the operation. The way is the method used to achieve that ends, and the means is the forces or materials that will be used to execute the ways. The Patriots intended to achieve the strategic goal of an independent Canada (ends) by seizing Navy Island and triggering a widespread uprising (ways) using their forces (means). However, as shall be shown below, neither the ways nor the means would be sufficient to achieve the Patriots' ends.[54]

The Seizure of Navy Island and the Sinking of the Caroline

The attack began on 14 December 1837. Van Rensselaer, Mackenzie, and 350 to 600 Patriots occupied Navy Island and set up an independent provisional government. Word spread quickly and supporters came from the surrounding area on both sides of the border bringing supplies and weapons, including some cannon.[55] For logistical support, the Patriots rented the *Caroline*, a steamship that they used to ferry supplies from the U.S. shore to the island. As the Patriots moved onto the island, it became clear very early that

Van Rensselaer was an ineffective leader. His drunkenness and inaction failed to inspire confidence and led to a large number of desertions.[56]

About six hundred Canadian militia led by Colonel Allan MacNab responded by firing artillery at the island but did little damage. The Patriots responded with their own artillery fire. With no change after a couple weeks, MacNab decided to take offensive action, in defiance of orders from Sir Francis Bond Head, the governor of Upper Canada. On 29 December, MacNab sent a company of men to raid the *Caroline*, which was moored in U.S. territory. The militia stormed the ship and abducted the small crew, killing a crewmember named Andrew Durfee in the process. Upon leaving the ship, they set it on fire, and it broke apart and sank. The Patriots occupied the island for another two weeks. However, with little action and virtually no direction from Van Rensselaer, desertions rapidly increased. Ultimately, with their severed logistical line, the Patriots were forced to leave.[57]

American Reaction

The sinking of the *Caroline* shocked and angered Americans, particularly those living close to the border. Many Americans flocked to the Patriot cause.[58] Complicating matters, the British government neither acknowledged nor disavowed the sinking of the *Caroline* as an official act by the British government.[59] Amid this political uncertainty, President Martin Van Buren wanted to avoid escalation and responded by asserting American neutrality in accordance with the Neutrality Act of 1818 that prohibited private citizens from conducting hostile acts toward another nation that was at peace with the United States.[60] Furthermore, he sent Major General Winfield Scott to the border,

without regular troops at his disposal, to quell the disturbance and calm the agitated population.[61]

Scott was an influential figure in the nineteenth century Army. Beginning his Army career in 1808, Scott fought in the War of 1812, where he participated in several battles along the U.S.-Canada border as a captain. After a defeat at the Battle of Queenston Heights, he blamed the militia, which he believed lacked discipline and commitment. He emerged from the war a hero, having risen to the rank of brigadier general in 1814, and he was committed to making the Army into a more professional institution.[62] Scott was viewed as a peacemaker and diplomat, a reputation gained partly through his actions in the Nullification Crisis of 1832 in South Carolina. President Andrew Jackson sent Scott to Charleston to inspect and reinforce coastal defenses in preparation for South Carolina's possible secession. Scott successfully penetrated Charleston society and completed his mission without arousing suspicion of his true motives.[63] He subsequently participated in the Seminole War in Florida and the Creek War in Georgia and Alabama in 1836. The war took longer than expected, and political rivals encouraged rumors that Scott was derelict in his duty. After a court of inquiry cleared him of wrongdoing, he returned home to New York. He was visiting President Van Buren in Washington when news of the Patriot War arrived. Van Buren wanted to preserve neutrality and aimed to halt U.S. citizen belligerence while also ensuring that U.S. territory would not be encroached upon by the Canadians. After announcing U.S. neutrality, he ordered Scott to the border to deal with the Patriots.[64]

Upon his arrival in New York on 7 January 1838, Scott met with local American authorities, and, leveraging the favorable reputation that he gained during the War of

1812, he worked with them to assemble troops and resources to quell the Patriot disturbance and prevent them from using U.S. territory as sanctuary. No regular troops were available, as they were engaged in Florida and on the western frontier. Because of concerns over the high state of local anger, as well as Scott's general mistrust of unprofessional militia, he had to rely on recruits and "uninfected militia from the Border States," such as Virginia and Kentucky.[65] Scott first went to Navy Island where he met with Van Rensselaer. He admonished him for violating the Neutrality Act by attacking Canada. He threatened them with force. While the Patriots were not persuaded by Scott, Canadian militia artillery fire did. When Van Rensselaer returned to U.S. territory, Scott had him arrested. Scott recognized that the winter months were best suited for attacks on Upper Canada from the United States due to the icy rivers allowing foot traffic. As a result, he spent the rest of the winter of 1838 at the border.[66]

Scott did not establish a permanent base of operations, opting instead to travel along the border with a marshal. At his various stops, he worked with the district commanders, attorneys general, and marshals to figure out how to deal with the Patriot movement and apply manpower and resources where they were needed.[67] Scott spoke directly to local residents in cities and towns along the border as well. In these speeches, he acknowledged the rightful outrage over the *Caroline* incident but excoriated the Patriots' actions as counter to American interests. He also made a point of reaffirming the neutrality of the United States, reminding the crowds of the U.S. peace treaty with Great Britain that ended the War of 1812 and the U.S. Neutrality Law.[68]

In addition, Scott communicated with British military authorities in Canada.[69] In one instance, his correspondence with a British commander defused rising tensions in the

Niagara River region. Scott, after learning the Patriots intended on hiring the steamer *Barcelona* to attack Canada, hired it in the name of the U.S. government and ordered her to return to Buffalo. The British had also learned of the Patriots' plans to use the *Barcelona* and stationed gunboats in the Niagara River to block the steamer's path. Scott communicated with the commander of the British gunboats, warning him that firing upon a ship in U.S. waters would be considered an act of aggression. Scott then placed artillery within range and sight of the British gunboats. The British allowed the *Barcelona* to pass, and the situation de-escalated.[70] In March 1838, with tensions eased, Scott was able to return home. He left control of the border to several key subordinates—all regular officers—that he installed as district commanders. Brigadier General Hugh Brady was placed at Lake Erie and Detroit. Colonel William Worth took charge of the Niagara, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence area. Colonel John Wool and Brigadier General Abraham Eustis positioned themselves in northern New York and Vermont. Scott would travel to Georgia to remove the Cherokee, but he would soon be back to the northern border.[71]

In his memoirs, Scott admitted that he was more of a warrior than a diplomat and that the residents in the area respected him for his actions during the war twenty-three years earlier.[72] While he may have influenced Americans who were neutral or not strongly allied with the Patriot movement, his diplomacy did not end the Patriots' activities. Scott's ability to prevent Patriot movement into Canada was as limited as the troops at his disposal.[73]

Attacks in the West

On the heels of President Van Buren's affirmation of neutrality in the wake of the *Caroline* affair, Henry S. Handy, an American from Michigan, planned and executed an

attack on Upper Canada. Handy was an acolyte of Andrew Jackson, who had appointed Handy to several minor political positions in the Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana area. Handy heard of possible rebellion in early 1837 and traveled to Toronto. After discussing matters with members of the Patriot movement in Toronto that fall, he decided to take action. Convinced that a widespread rebellion was imminent, Handy made his way to Detroit and began preparing for war.[74] By the end of 1837, he had managed to gather hundreds of men and weapons to serve in what he named the Patriot Army of the Northwest.[75]

Handy devised a plan to attack across the Detroit River in two columns. His plan exploited the fact the British militia in the area was considered weak and poorly trained and that it would take several days' march for regular British forces to arrive. Handy established a base of operations at Peach Island on the Detroit River across from Windsor, Upper Canada. From there, one of his columns would travel downstream and occupy the island of Bois Blanc across from Fort Malden, Upper Canada. With the assistance of the *Anne*, a schooner that Handy procured, the forces on Bois Blanc would call for the surrender of Fort Malden. In the event the Canadian militia refused, the Patriots would attack the fort while the forces on Peach Island attacked Windsor.[76]

However, in late December, after a meeting in Buffalo, Van Rensselaer sent Patriot "General" Thomas Sutherland to Detroit with orders to command the Patriot forces in that theater. Sutherland's arrival was not well received by Handy, but the two generals reached a compromise. Sutherland agreed to command the column headed to Bois Blanc, leaving Handy in charge of the overall operation.[77]

The attack began on the evening of 8 January. Handy put a doctor, Brigadier General Edward Theller, in command of the *Anne*. Theller, an Irish immigrant with a deep enmity toward the British, sailed the ship between Bois Blanc and Fort Malden on the evening of 8 January. When the Patriots did not answer the fort's hail, the Canadian militiamen fired their muskets. The *Anne* responded by firing its cannon on the town of Amherst, an act that enraged some of the Patriots on Bois Blanc.[78]

The next morning, Sutherland's forces occupied Bois Blanc. The *Anne* made another pass by Fort Malden that morning, firing its cannon. However, this time musket fire did more damage, causing casualties and damaging the small ship's rigging and sails. One of the casualties was the helmsman. The ship ended up running aground, and the Canadian militia continued their fire and inflicted more casualties. Seeing the plight of the *Anne*, Sutherland promptly ordered a retreat. The surviving crew of the *Anne*, including Theller, was captured by the Canadians.[79]

In February 1838, the Patriots struck again along the Detroit River, this time at Fighting Island, a few miles north of Bois Blanc Island. This time, the British had a significantly larger force in the area, and they were ready for the Patriots. The Patriots were quickly dispersed once the British began fighting.[80]

On 26 February 1838, the Patriots trekked across the ice to Pelee Island, due north of Sandusky, Ohio, in Lake Erie. On 3 March, the British counterattacked. The Patriots withdrew to the south but were met by a covering force intending to block their escape. The Patriots had no choice but to stand their ground and fight. Captain Henry Van Rensselaer, cousin of Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, particularly distinguished himself. Holding his men in position and returning fire on the British, the Patriots inflicted a large

number of casualties. However, Captain George Browne, a British officer and veteran of Waterloo, ordered his troops to fix bayonets and charge. The Patriot line broke, and they scattered across the ice back to the United States. Henry Van Rensselaer was killed in the battle. The British did not pursue in order to tend to their wounded. Although they ultimately lost the island, the Patriots had inflicted unexpectedly heavy casualties on the British. However, with the loss of aggressive men and effective leaders such as Henry Van Rensselaer, success seemed unreachable for the Patriots.[81]

Through the late winter and spring of 1838, several smaller raids resulted in more failure and the arrest of more Patriots. At the end of May with the river ice melted, the Patriots attacked the *Sir Robert Peel*, a steamer that they intended to use to support future attacks on Canadian soil. The Patriots successfully took the ship with little resistance. However, a number of Patriots got lost in the forest, and consequently, there was no one able to crew the boat. The Patriots ended up burning it and departing.[82] Recognizing the continued threat to Upper Canada, the Canadian legislature took action, passing the Lawless Aggressions Act. This enabled easier prosecution of the Patriots by easing the rules for evidence. The result was a series of speedy trials and executions.[83] Sutherland and Theller were both found guilty of violating the Lawless Aggressions Act and sentenced to death. However, after review, both were commuted to life in prison.[84] Not all Patriots were so lucky. Trials led to two executions; more would follow in the coming months.[85]

The Formation of the Hunters Lodges and the Battle of the Windmill

The initial skirmishes of the Patriot War resulted in many Patriots fleeing Canada with their families to become refugees in the United States. Many settled on the border. While they continued to plan invasions into Canada, their plans were stymied when British and Canadian officials learned of their plans. Talk of starting a secret society began. In the summer of 1838, a number of refugees and their American supporters in Vermont formed these secret societies to promote the Patriot cause and fight for Canadian liberation. They adopted the cause originally expressed in Papineau's "Ninety-Two Resolutions" and Mackenzie's "Seventh Report of Grievances." The secret societies were known as Hunters Lodges, and these organizations spread into New York and beyond. By the end of the summer, there were hundreds of lodges and thousands of members known as Patriot Hunters. They were well organized with levels of membership, loyalty oaths, and secret rituals. On 16 September 1838, the Hunters held a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, to choose leaders for the pending Canadian invasion, as well as to create a provisional government in Canada. Leaders also agreed to launch simultaneous attacks in November on Windsor and near the St. Lawrence River in hopes of dividing British-Canadian troops.[86]

In October 1838, a Hunters Lodge in New York devised a large raid at Prescott, Upper Canada to capture Fort Wellington. John Ward Birge, the lodge leader, claimed to have assembled about twenty thousand men. While this large number never materialized, they were well equipped and supported by artillery, and this was the most formidable force the Patriot movement was able to assemble throughout the war. Interestingly, Birge's plan, an attack on Prescott, Upper Canada, across from Ogdensburg, New York,

on the St. Lawrence River, was planned without the knowledge of the Hunters Lodges in Cleveland. This represented a significant internal power struggle within the organization. Birge exploited a rift in the organization; the New York Hunters believed the Cleveland Hunters were too slow to take action. The result was the largest battle—and largest Patriot defeat—of the Patriot War.[87]

Massing forces without British knowledge was essential. Birge attempted to prevent the British from detecting their movements by infiltrating Canada using the passenger steamer *United States*. According to his plan, Birge would move out ahead and organize men in Ogdensburg on 8 November. Additional Hunters would move to cities along the route of the *United States*, embarking unarmed, and arriving in Ogdensburg. Colonel Nils von Scholtz, a Finnish immigrant to the United States who had a multinational military background, was charged with sailing two large hired schooners, the *Charlotte of Oswego* and the *Charlotte of Toronto*, from Oswego to Ogdensburg laden with four hundred men, as well as cannon, rifles, and ammunition on 10 November. From Ogdensburg, they would organize for battle and launch their attack on Prescott and seize Fort Wellington, just across the river. As with any plan, outside factors jeopardized success when the *United States* was delayed due to maintenance issues.[88] Maintenance issues or not, maintaining secrecy would prove to be impossible due to British infiltration into the New York Patriot Hunters.[89]

The *United States* finally got underway on 11 November. The initial load of Hunters boarded at Oswego as planned. The steamer encountered the two schooners laden with weapons that had departed Oswego the day prior. They were both ostensibly dead in the water due to poor winds and requested a tow from the captain of the *United*

States. Once the boats were secured alongside the steamer, the Hunters emerged and armed themselves, taking control of the *United States*. Early on the morning of 12 November, once they were within seven miles, Hunter officers ordered the men to board the schooners. Half refused to do so and von Scholtz left them on the *United States*. The remaining Hunters under von Scholtz then cut loose and continued downstream to Prescott.[90]

As they approached the shore, the Hunters began receiving militia musket fire. Despite their attempts at secrecy, the British spies had ruined any hope of achieving surprise. The schooners ran aground in shallow water in the confusion and were stuck in the middle of the river. With assistance, the Hunters were able to free the smaller of the two schooners, the *Charlotte of Toronto*, and land at a small village called Newport, just downstream from Prescott. Using nearby buildings and a windmill for cover, they began preparing defensive positions for an imminent British response. The *Charlotte of Oswego* was still stuck in the mud, though, and exchanged fire with a British vessel, the *Experiment*, commanded by British Lieutenant William Newton Fowell. Once freed, it offloaded troops and began ferrying supplies. Concurrently, U.S. troops under Colonel William Jenkins Worth, a veteran of the War of 1812, arrived on scene under orders from Major General Scott to enforce the Neutrality Act. Colonel Worth seized both schooners in U.S. waters. The *Telegraph*, an American steamer, had also arrived to patrol the river, ensuring an end to any crossings.[91]

On the morning of 13 November, the British ships the *Experiment*, the *Cobourg*, and the *Queen Victory* began firing on the Hunters as a force of five hundred Canadian militia and one hundred British regulars surrounded Newport and began attacking from

the north. The battle lasted for four days, coming to an end on 16 November, after an additional two hundred British regulars and one hundred Canadian militia joined the fight along with a fleet of gunboats towing barges with artillery, killing or apprehending the remaining 117 Patriot Hunters that were fit to fight. It was a crushing defeat for the Patriots.[92] The next month was the last major battle in the west as well. On 4 December, between 134 and 164 Patriot Hunters under General Lucius Verus Bierce, a lawyer from Ohio, attacked a Canadian militia barracks in Windsor, Upper Canada, just across the Detroit River from Detroit, Michigan. A Canadian militia force of sixty initially mustered and counterattacked. With the addition of one hundred British regulars, the counterattack became a rout with twenty-six Hunters dead and forty-five taken prisoner.[93]

After the defeats at Prescott and Windsor, the Patriots and Hunters became less active. The Department of War had sent Scott back to the northern border in response to the attack on Windsor in December 1838 with permission to use military force against continued violations of neutrality. Aside from a few small scattered actions, the large attacks ceased. Scott again chose to use diplomacy and traveled throughout the area speaking to crowds and calling for restraint. However, the challenges for the United States and Canada continued with border disagreements, specifically the Maine-New Brunswick border. The relationship would be further strained within a few months with the arrest of a Canadian citizen in the United States.[94]

The Arrest and Trial of Alexander McLeod

During the Patriot War, militaries on both sides of the border were brought into the conflict. The British/Canadians aimed to protect British sovereignty from rebels, and the United States aimed to enforce neutrality and ensure border security. Both faced the

possibility of taking action against citizens from the other nation that could be interpreted as an act of aggression by the other. As the Patriot War faded, border tensions eased. However, that would not last for very long. American anger over the sinking of the *Caroline* would return with the arrest of Alexander McLeod, who was arrested by New York authorities and accused of participating in its sinking. This provided a new source of tension in U.S.-Canada relations.[95]

McLeod was a Canadian and an ardent British loyalist. Suspicion of his involvement in the sinking of the *Caroline* had followed him for some time. He was first arrested by local authorities in Manchester, New York, in September 1840 but was released because authorities lacked enough evidence to hold him. In Niagara County, he was arrested a second time. However, he was again released, this time due to inconsistencies on the arrest warrant. Finally, on 12 November 1840, McLeod's luck ran out when he was arrested by local authorities in Lewiston, New York. Three witnesses came forward, claiming that McLeod had boasted about his involvement in the sinking of the *Caroline* and the murder of Andrew Durfee in United States waters.[96]

The arrest triggered a flurry of activity from the British embassy. Concerned that a British subject could be tried and found guilty in an American court, the embassy immediately contacted U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth demanding McLeod's release. British ambassador Henry Fox provided two reasons. First, he claimed that McLeod had nothing to do with the sinking of the *Caroline*. Despite what McLeod may have bragged about, there could not be enough evidence to arrest him. Second, even if McLeod had been involved, it was an act between two nations and therefore unable to be held personally responsible for the act.[97] The United States responded by sending Scott

back to New York in an effort to help calm rising tensions. While he obeyed his orders, Scott privately believed that a large contingent of American troops should have been placed on the border as a show of American strength. However, Congress refused to fund such an endeavor.[98]

Great Britain grew increasingly irritated with a perceived lack of attention to the matter by the U.S. government. Forsyth explained to British authorities that the federal government could not inhibit the legal processes of a state. New York, he argued, had a right to pursue justice for the *Caroline*. This exasperated the British. They were unconcerned with states' rights; they wanted to protect their sovereignty over a subject.[99] Furthermore, New York viewed the situation differently from the British ambassador. By insisting that McLeod had been following orders, the British implied that the sinking of the *Caroline* was an official act sponsored by the British government.[100] However, the British government had never officially acknowledged this. American minister to London Andrew Stevenson under the direction of Forsyth, had sent a letter requesting an official explanation of the attack on the *Caroline* on 22 May 1838. The letter was never answered by Henry Fox.[101] Therefore, New York interpreted it as an act by an individual violating the law on his own initiative. Great Britain's interpretation was all the more troublesome because it threw fuel on the fire of the *Caroline* incident, reviving U.S public calls for war with Canada.[102]

The British Parliament convened in February 1841 to debate a response to McLeod's arrest. British foreign secretary Viscount Palmerston, with parliament's backing, warned the United States that if McLeod were found guilty and subsequently executed, it would result in an immediate war between the two nations.[103] To complicate

matters, President Van Buren lost the 1840 election to William Henry Harrison.[104] At first, it appeared that the new administration would be more amenable to Great Britain in this matter. The new Secretary of State Daniel Webster acknowledged the importance of the issue and met with British Ambassador Fox in early 1841.[105] Webster was able to convince the British to claim responsibility for the sinking of the *Caroline* as a defensive national act, which would therefore require McLeod to be released.[106]

The governor of New York, William Seward, disagreed. He was unwilling to give up New York's jurisdiction in the case and completely opposed federal interference.[107] For months, the federal government tried unsuccessfully to secure McLeod's release in the state supreme court. The trial began in New York in October 1841.[108] Survivors of the *Caroline* crew testified, but none were able to unequivocally place McLeod at the scene.[109] Other witnesses described McLeod's bragging of the incident, but their testimony was attacked effectively by the defense.[110] Thus, McLeod was acquitted of all charges.[111]

After the trial, the memory of both the *Caroline* and the Patriots began to fade, and much of the animosity between the two countries faded along with it.[112] One significant consequence of McLeod's trial was the passage of the U.S. Remedial Justice Act of August 1842, also known as the McLeod Law. This law clarified that the foreign relations of the United States were the sole responsibility of the federal government, not individual states.[113] The United States did not want to repeat the McLeod affair again, and the Remedial Justice Act reinforced the U.S. commitment to a single voice in conducting foreign relations. Diplomacy would certainly be needed as disputes with Great Britain would continue, especially in matters of the undefined U.S.-Canada border.

The Webster-Ashburton Treaty

Independent of the Patriot movement, the issue of the Maine-New Brunswick border remained a significant dispute between the United States and Great Britain. The Patriot War, specifically the *Caroline* Affair, and the McLeod trial substantially tested the two nations' commitment to diplomacy. However, U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Webster and British Special Minister Alexander Baring, First Lord of Ashburton, arguably prevented war between the United States and Great Britain over border disputes with the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842.[114]

Getting to that agreement was not easy. The Aroostook Question, as it was known, referred to the Aroostook territory along the border. Both New Brunswick and Maine claimed possession of that territory. Additionally, there were American citizens and British subjects living in the region. In late 1838, while dealing with the Patriot and Hunter crisis, General Scott was dispatched to Maine to handle the dispute as a soldier-diplomat. Recognizing that the dispute could lead to violence between New Brunswick and Maine, Scott had to address the internal politics of the latter. Both Democrats and Whigs were united in their calls for armed action. Similar to the issues with New York during the McLeod trial, Scott had to convince Maine lawmakers and citizens to remove armed militia from the area and allow the federal government to handle foreign relations that affected Maine.[115]

Additionally, Scott had to convince the British to remove their troops from the area. To accomplish that, he pursued a personal relationship with British officials in order to win their trust. Here he was lucky. The lieutenant governor of New Brunswick was Sir John Harvey. During the War of 1812, Harvey had been a lieutenant colonel assigned as

the adjutant-general for Upper Canada. American officers praised Harvey for his kindness and humane treatment of American prisoners. Scott and Harvey had interacted with each other during the War of 1812. Then-Colonel Harvey had made remarks about then-Colonel Scott's honor when Scott had resumed hostilities against the British after being captured and paroled. In 1813, Colonel Scott captured Harvey's effects in York. He promptly returned them to Harvey, earning both men mutual respect.[116]

With this relationship in place, Scott initiated a correspondence with Harvey. In a series of letters, Scott enabled Harvey and Governor John Fairfield of Maine to reach a temporary agreement. The United States would control the Aroostook area, and New Brunswick would control the Madawaska settlements. Through personal persuasion, he also successfully calmed the calls for war among the state legislature. By March, Scott, Harvey, and Fairfield had successfully prevented an outbreak of violence between Maine and New Brunswick.[117]

However, the only thing that could ensure a long-term peace was a settlement of the border that was acceptable to all parties. Daniel Webster and Lord Ashburton began their work toward a permanent solution in the summer of 1842. Webster went so far as to publish articles in local newspapers to build public support for an agreement established on compromise, and he invited representatives from both Maine and Massachusetts to the treaty negotiations.[118]

The deal was finalized in July 1842. Compromise was reached, and the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick was finalized. According to historian Howard Jones, this agreement marked a significant turning point for Anglo-American relations. Prior to the agreement, many Americans felt that the British government did not respect U.S.

sovereignty. From the boarding of American ships and impressment of American sailors to the perceived indignity of the *Caroline* affair, the British seemed heavy handed and indifferent to American national honor. However, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty indicated British willingness to regard the United States as an equal and served as the foundation of mutual interest in a stable border situation.[119]

Conclusion

The Patriot War is often dismissed as a minor episode in both U.S. and Canadian history, one that is all but forgotten. However, when viewed in the context of Anglo-American relations and the border security and diplomatic challenges during the nineteenth century, it is clear that the Patriot War tested the American, Canadian, and British governments. Through all of this, three salient points emerge.

First, Patriot leadership was disjointed and lacking in common focus or cohesion. Because of this lacking leadership, there was no clear vision of how the Patriots would achieve their political objective of Canadian independence from British rule. They had no plan to link their tactical actions with a strategic objective. An excellent example of this is the seizure of Navy Island. Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, the leader of that operation, who was selected mostly for his prominent name and political connections, was certainly the chief culprit for the lack of action.[120] The Patriot leadership failed to exploit the few successes that they did achieve. With little achieved, it was too easy for Patriots to simply wander off.

Second, the Patriots did not enjoy overwhelming popular support. While there was a general disillusionment among Canadians with the Canadian government and a fervent and vocal group willing to take up arms, there was no unifying leader or principle

that drew the required numbers to their cause. When the Patriots seized Navy Island or moved on Prescott, there were no Canadian masses rallying to their cause or preventing the militia or British regulars from driving them out of Canada.

American citizens who lived along the border were not only sympathetic, but many took up arms in support of the rebellion. However, the U.S. government remained neutral and prohibited American citizens from participating. This development tested the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, as well as the U.S. Army's ability to enforce the Neutrality Act of 1818. Both were up to the task, successfully quelling the uprising while maintaining peace between the two governments. The Patriot War was an example of military and diplomatic instruments of national power being used effectively and in concert to protect and maintain the border. A prime player was Scott's role as a soldier-diplomat. During the Patriot War, he used both militia and regular forces to provide a deterrent, both to domestic filibusters, as well as potentially aggressive action by the British. His actions during the Aroostook Question gave diplomats the time they needed to develop a mutually acceptable solution in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. The professionalization of the Army that had occurred over the previous decades ensured that the regular forces on the border and their leadership were capable of dealing with the complex task of securing the border. Furthermore, the militaries on both sides of the border focused on the filibusters, rather than on each other, successfully avoiding inadvertent armed confrontation between the two nations.

The Patriot War, to include the *Caroline* affair and McLeod trial, was an important factor in the passage of the Remedial Justice Act and Webster-Ashburton Treaty. The former was a significant development in the role of the federal government

and its relationship with the states. The latter was a significant development in Anglo-American relations.

The commitment of the British Canadian, and U.S. governments to diplomatic solutions and peace along their common border would continue to be tested. Only a few decades after the Patriot War, a new group dissatisfied with overall British rule would rise to test the commitment to peaceful relations between the United States, Britain, and Canada. The Fenian Brotherhood would aim to relieve Ireland from the British yoke, but like the Patriots, they were also doomed to failure.

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[10] Ibid., 57-58.

[11] Morton, 23.

[12] Ibid., 55-56.

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CHAPTER 3

THE FENIAN RAIDS, 1866-1871

Similar to the Patriot War, the Fenian Raids had their roots in discontent with British rule. Unlike the Patriot War, the Fenians' grievances with the British crown stemmed from the treatment of the Irish in Ireland. Author David Doolin describes the Fenians as a transnational organization that was the product of Irish oppression and emigration to the United States. He argues that the attempted invasion of Canada demonstrated their unwillingness to forsake their Irish identity for British or American identity.[1] More than three million Irish immigrants left their homeland to arrive on American soil from 1845 to 1870 and did so with a strong sense of Irish identity.[2] Their Irish pride and nationalism was further bolstered as a result of their treatment by American Protestants.[3]

As an offshoot of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), an organization dedicated to fomenting an armed uprising in Ireland for independence, the Fenian Brotherhood's original aim was to raise funds in the United States for the IRB as they pursued Irish independence. At the end of the Civil War—in which a large number of Irish immigrants had served—the Fenians built an army of combat veterans.[4] The American Fenians' target gradually shifted from the Irish homeland to Canada, a much closer British target. To understand the context of the Fenian Raids and the factors that led to their failure, a brief summary of Canadian history after the Patriot War is required.

Canadian Developments, 1841-1866

In the twenty-five years that followed the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty, Canada changed significantly. The population steadily increased, and the colonies expanded. Certainly, there were still deep cultural differences between the British and French Canadians, not to mention the large indigenous population. However, by 1867, Canada had evolved from a loose collection of colonies to a united confederation of provinces.[5]

Author Scott See views Canada's transformation during this period as indicative of a larger pattern in Canadian history, which is that changes that occurred were evolutionary rather than revolutionary.[6] Significant reforms began in 1841 with the Act of Union between Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada became Canada West, and Lower Canada became Canada East. Additionally, the legislatures of both Canadas were combined with the seats evenly split to provide equal representation. These two provinces arguably became the most powerful colonies in British North America.[7] John George Lambton, the Earl of Durham, was sent by the British government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the Patriot War in 1838. In his resulting report, he argued for the unification of the Canadas in order to reduce the influence of the *Canadiens* and to further assimilate them.[8]

The reform movement continued to grow throughout the 1840s. Although not the result of Patriot actions, many of the Patriots' grievances were addressed, specifically, increased representation. The Legislative Assemblies were granted more power over legislation, thereby increasing representation of the people. Additionally, the judicial and political systems were reformed. These reforms allowed the idea of Canadian

Confederation to take hold. New political parties originated at this time as well. In the mid-1850s, the two major parties in Canada West were the Liberal-Conservative Party and the "Clear Grits." Formed by John McDonald and Etienne Cartier, the Liberal-Conservative party became a significant proponent of Confederation. George Brown was a prominent backer of the "Clear Grits" party, the chief opposition of the Liberal-Conservatives. The Grits promoted reforms to the voting system, including the secret ballot, universal male suffrage, and a representation system based on population size.[9]

At the same time, the *rouges* and the *bleus* formed in Canada East. The *rouges* consisted of many reformers, including Louis Joseph Papineau. The *rouges* wanted to decrease the influence of the Catholic Church in government matters. In opposition to them were the *bleus* that were pulled from former Tories. Owing to the unification of the Canadas, the Liberal-Conservatives aligned with the *bleus*, which later became the modern Liberal Party, and the "Clear Grits" aligned with the *rouges*.[10]

Despite party differences, powerful political figures formed a "Great Coalition" that pushed for Confederation of the British North American colonies. Liberal-Conservatives Macdonald and Cartier allied with Brown from the "Clear Grits" to work toward Confederation. They saw it as a way to move forward with additional important reforms. Among the issues they championed were the facilitation of western expansion and investment and development of railroad infrastructure. Attempting to push effective legislation through the five independent colonial legislative assemblies of Canada East, Canada West, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland to move forward with these issues was nearly impossible.[11]

Another contributing factor to Confederation was shifts in thinking in London. Colonies were expensive, and Great Britain had begun to embrace free trade over mercantilism. The British government repealed the Corn Laws in 1846, which had granted favorable trade to Canada. This threatened producers of Canadian exports that Great Britain could purchase elsewhere for a better price. Additionally, the U.S. Civil War strained Anglo-American relations. Great Britain relied on Southern cotton and other goods economically. There was support among the British populace, especially the upper classes, for the Confederacy. Unionists became bitter over pro-Confederate newspaper accounts in Britain, as well as British shipbuilding and outfitting for the South. The animosity of American Unionists reached such a point in 1865 that British newspapers and even Parliament debated whether the United States would declare war on Great Britain or invade Canada after the Civil War ended. Proponents of Confederation argued it would enable the provinces to more effectively deal with economic uncertainty and common defense issues.[12]

Talk of forming a regional union of eastern Canada began in September 1864. Canada West, Canada East, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island sent representatives to a meeting to discuss possibilities. Intrigued by the idea, representatives organized a more detailed meeting held in October. This time they debated the appropriate roles of the provincial and federal governments. One objection to Confederation was that a federal government would favor larger, more populous provinces over smaller ones. Additionally, eastern colonies did not see how they would benefit from westward expansion. To some, it appeared that the winners of Confederation would only be Canada East and Canada West.[13] French Canadians in particular were

largely split on the issue. The *rouges* staunchly opposed Confederation, seeing it as a final step in the assimilation of the *Canadiens*. However, Cartier, one of the founders of the Liberal-Conservative Party, countered that the federal government would preserve and protect their culture and language.[14]

Ultimately, only four of the six colonies in attendance agreed to join a Confederation. Nonetheless, the Confederation was approved by Parliament in London in March, and on 1 July 1867, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Canada West (renamed Ontario) and Canada East (renamed Quebec) formed the Dominion of Canada.[15] The west coast territory of British Columbia joined the Confederation in 1871, and Prince Edward Island joined in 1873.[16] Newfoundland, however, did not enter the Dominion until 1927.[17] In the midst of Canada's mid-nineteenth century evolution, the dissatisfaction with Britain that caused the Patriot War dissipated. However, inside the United States, a new force was rising to test American neutrality. The Fenian Brotherhood would now come to the stage to free Ireland through the most immediate British target: Canada.

U.S. Army Development, 1840-1866

After the Webster-Ashburton Treaty and end of the Second Seminole War, there seemed to be less of a need for a large standing Army. Although some budget and end strength cuts were made, the Army's role as a constabulary force in an ever-expanding frontier meant that the cuts were relatively mild. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, the Army served as a cadre for expansion. On 13 May 1846, Congress authorized the Army to double the number of enlisted soldiers in infantry, artillery, and cavalry units. It also authorized fifty thousand volunteers to serve for one year and added a Mounted Rifleman

Regiment. In total, the Army nearly tripled in size, to nearly eighteen thousand officers and men. In 1847, Congress authorized an additional ten regiments. After the war, the Army returned nearly to its former size. It had proven the effectiveness of the cadre principal and was an effective fighting force in a conventional war.[18] Keys to the Army's success in the Mexican-American War were the Army's maturing doctrine and the improved professionalization of the force.[19]

As the United States continued to expand westward in the 1850s, the Army's missions as a frontier constabulary and enforcement of Indian policy continued. The Army grew gradually but steadily, and by 1861, the Army had grown to more than sixteen thousand officers and men.[20] Doctrine continued to develop, but as before, the emphasis was on conventional warfare; however, the Army's constabulary role provided regular troops with practical experience in Kansas and Utah and conflicts such as the Third Seminole War and the Pig War. By the beginning of the Civil War, the Army was again prepared to conduct conventional warfare and execute the cadre principal.[21]

Irish Immigration and Identity in America and the Fenian Brotherhood

In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States experienced a large surge of Irish immigration. From 1845 to 1870, at least three million Irish immigrants came to America to escape famine and persecution. They sought a better life in America but retained their strong cultural identity.[22] Although they escaped the troubles of their homeland, the Irish were disdained by many American citizens who accused them of holding onto their Irish culture, specifically their Catholicism, and failing to assimilate into America. Politically, this occurred on a partisan divide, the Democrats welcoming the Irish and the Whigs

spurning them. Ultimately, this served to further strengthen their Irish identity and nationalism.[23]

In this environment, the Fenian Brotherhood arose in the United States. Initially conceived to consolidate Irish-American support for an uprising in Ireland, the Fenian Brotherhood eventually shifted aims, launching attacks into British-controlled Canada after the Civil War. After a series of unsuccessful raids, the plan was abandoned.

Two main figures emerged as the predominant leaders in the early Fenian movement: James Stephens and John O'Mahony. Stephens, remaining in Ireland itself, was the major motivating force behind the Fenians in the homeland, while O'Mahony transplanted Fenian ideals to the New World. They had both gained prominence due to their participation in the Young Irelander Rebellion in Ireland in 1848, where they successfully held out overnight in a farmhouse against British soldiers and police. They escaped the next day and eventually fled to Paris.[24]

While in Paris after the failed uprising, Stephens and O'Mahony saw the opportunity to establish an independent Irish state through large-scale revolution. The question was how to do it. The main lessons they took with them from their Young Irelander experience and the failures of the Revolutions of 1848 on the European continent were the need for training and weapons. Thus, they needed better funding, which meant appealing to a larger base of support. To do so, they agreed to compromise on some of their ideals in order to further their goals. As avowed socialists, they were committed to eradicating the evils of capitalism; however, they would not be able to gain much money from the predominantly working class Irish. Thus, they agreed to downplay their ardent socialist beliefs in order to gain as much favor as possible from the capitalist

Protestant Irish.[25] Additionally, they required recruits with military experience. The most viable option at that time seemed to be to recruit from Irish men serving in the British military.[26]

After the situation in Ireland settled down, Stephens returned to Ireland where he continued his work for independence. O'Mahony, seeing an opportunity to raise needed funds from Irish-Americans, emigrated to the United States in 1853. Shortly after settling in New York City, O'Mahony met with Michael Doheny, founder of the Emmet Monument Association, an organization that had already done much to establish and nurture Irish identity and community in the United States. Although life was difficult for Irish immigrants in the United States, they did take advantage of their constitutional freedoms of speech and assembly and became involved in political activities advocating for a free Ireland.[27] O'Mahony found a willing audience and a source of funding.[28] In 1858, O'Mahony founded the Fenian Brotherhood, deriving the name from ancient stories of Ireland ancient warrior caste, the *Na Fianna*. That same year, Stephens founded the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Ireland.[29]

The Fenian Brotherhood organized into circles, similar to franchises. A "center" commanded each circle, which was further split into cells commanded by captains. Lower ranking individual cell members, did not know the identities of members outside their own cell. This facilitated secrecy within the organization while still maintaining an overall Fenian identity. However, despite these efforts at secrecy, British spies managed to infiltrate the organization, a fact that would significantly degrade Fenian effectiveness.[30]

Although the Fenian Brotherhood was successful in raising funds in the first few years of its existence, the Fenians were mistrusted by a large portion of the Irish-American community. Although they may have desired Irish independence, the average Irish-American was suspicious of Fenian motives.[31] Additionally, in terms of funding, they faced conflicting conditions. Most of the wealthier Irish were only interested in funding an active rebellion. However, to help get a large rebellion active quickly, they needed funding from the wealthy Irish.[32] This may explain some of the early problems the Fenians had turning rhetoric into rebellion, with the Irish who dutifully contributed eventually demanding answers for the lack of action. While funding remained an issue, finding trained troops became easier with the onset of the American Civil War.

The Fenian Brotherhood during the Civil War

The Fenians continued to collect money and send it to the Irish Republican Brotherhood even while a large number of Irish immigrants were serving in the Civil War. Many Irish-Americans felt loyalty to the Democratic Party due to its opposition to the Whig and Know-Nothing Parties, which were openly hostile to immigrants, alcohol, and Catholics. However, they were in favor of preserving the Union. Despite this divided loyalty during the Civil War, they enlisted in droves not only because they wanted to preserve the Union, but also because they were attracted to the steady paycheck and the opportunity for improved social standing associated with military service.[33] In total, over 150,000 Irish immigrants fought for the Union.[34] Back in Ireland, Stephens seethed at the recruitment and death of thousands of Irish in America while their homeland continued to endure British oppression. Many Fenians, however, saw Civil War service as a chance to eventually add professional military men with combat experience to their ranks.[35]

Building clout throughout the Civil War and feeling empowered to exercise their American freedoms of speech and assembly, in 1863 the Fenians publicly announced plans to provide funding and resources to support revolution in Ireland as soon as the Civil War was over. Their fiery rhetoric perturbed the British ambassador enough to prompt him to ask Secretary of State William Seward to intervene. However, Seward rebuffed him on the grounds that they were exercising American liberties.[36] By 1865, O'Mahony's Fenian Brotherhood was on the verge of being co-opted by future congressman William Randall Roberts and Thomas William Sweeny, a one-armed brigadier general in the U.S. Army and veteran of both the Civil War and the Mexican-American War. These two men had different plans for the Fenians, intending to attack Great Britain indirectly through Canada rather than in Ireland. By October 1865, they had wrested control of the organization from O'Mahony.[37]

The Rise of the Roberts-Sweeny Faction and Their Plans for the Fenians

The Second Fenian Congress was held on 18 January 1865, in Cincinnati, Ohio. There, O'Mahony promised that a Fenian army would soon face the British in battle and free Ireland from oppression.[38] However, there was growing discontent among the Fenians. Many were impatient with the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Instead of attacking across the Atlantic, they preferred an easier target closer to home: attacking the British in North America. General Sweeny, a prominent member of this influential faction and distinguished Civil War veteran, devised a plan that proved to be popular.[39]

At the Congress, O'Mahony debated with William Randall Roberts, another prominent leader and supporter of Sweeny. Roberts advocated attacking Canada. He

argued Ireland was too close to the British mainland and the reinforcements it could provide. Additionally, he asserted that attacking Canada was more likely to draw the United States into the war. Citing presumed historical enmity between the United States and Britain, as well as the American concept of Manifest Destiny, Roberts was sure the U.S would side with the Fenians and their effort in Canada. This, he argued, had the potential to negate the manpower and materiel advantages enjoyed by the British. O'Mahony disagreed with the plan to attack Canada. Instead, he advocated working with the Irish Republican Brotherhood to seize a parcel of land in Ireland and pursue recognition and aid from the United States.[40]

While nothing final came of the debate, Roberts and Sweeny did manage to pass two resolutions by the end of the Congress. First, because they mistrusted the use of the money send to Ireland, they called for an independent audit of the financial records of the Fenian Brotherhood. Second, they resolved to send representatives to Ireland to evaluate the use of American funds meant for revolution, the leadership of James Stephens, and the willingness and ability of the Irish population to revolt. After years of providing money with nothing to show for it, the Roberts-Sweeny faction demanded answers and had come to distrust the leadership of both the Fenian Brotherhood and the Irish Republican Brotherhood.[41]

It only got worse for O'Mahony in the following months. In addition to the factionalism in America, O'Mahony found himself in the middle of a rift between America and Ireland. On the one hand, he could not compel Stephens to take steps to satisfy the Roberts-Sweeny faction, who demanded action and questioned the use of their money. On the other hand, he endured Stephens' questioning of the American Fenians'

commitment to their cause and his increasing demands to send more money that O'Mahony was unable to provide.[42]

After the Civil War, impatience among the Fenians grew, and the influence of Roberts and Sweeny grew with it. Concerned that an uprising was being planned, the British government, arrested a number of known and suspected Fenians in Ireland, including James Stephens.[43] This was a significant blow to O'Mahony and his future with the Fenian Brotherhood. In October 1865, the Third Fenian Congress was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Due to the arrest of Stephens and the growing impatience of the Fenians, Roberts and Sweeny were able to wrest control from O'Mahony. In effect, the Fenian Brotherhood was split. Roberts and Sweeny controlled most of the organization, while a significant faction remained loyal to O'Mahony.[44]

The new leadership wasted no time pushing their agenda. By 28 October, Roberts was installed as the new Fenian as President and Sweeny as Secretary of War. Shortly thereafter, Sweeny submitted to Roberts a bold, detailed plan of action for attacking Canada. The fourteen-page manuscript analyzed enemy defenses using intelligence gathered from "reports of my own secret agents and by those made by British officials to their own government," and provided an invasion plan.[45] He eschewed the idea of small bands of guerrillas operating throughout Canada. Instead, his plan called for five columns attacking key points in Canada simultaneously. Describing Canada's shape as an "hour-glass," Sweeny's goal was to split Canada into two at the thinnest point of the hourglass while preventing the movement of British troops by cutting key lines of communication.[46]

Sweeny intended for the attack to take place during the winter months, when the rivers would be frozen and easily crossable by dismounted troops while the British ability to move ships or boats in the area to threaten Fenian lines of communication would be limited. The first column was to attack from Detroit across the Detroit River toward the Canadian town of London to seize control of the Great Western Railroad and disrupt British troop movements. A second column would attack across the Niagara River and seize control of the Welland Canal at Hamilton, preventing British use of waterways.[47] A third column would press across the St. Lawrence River from Ogdensburg, seizing the towns of Prescott and Boulder and continuing north to Ottawa City. These three cities were strategically important, forming the thinnest part of the "hour-glass," while Ottawa City also housed important government facilities. Control of these cities would effectively split Canada in half. Sweeny's assessment of the strength of the defenses of Ottawa City made him optimistic of a swift victory.[48] A fourth column would attack parallel to the New York and Montreal Railroad and seize the bridge across the Ottawa River near Perrot Island, preventing westward movement. Finally, a fifth column would be a smaller force attacking across the Maine border to seize control of the Metis Road, cutting off ground communications with the eastern territories of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.[49]

While the plan was aggressive, it had several weaknesses. First, it called for an attack in the winter. While providing certain advantages, such as mobility and protection from British naval forces, it left their lightly equipped force exposed to the elements while fighting and conducting movements across vast distances. Second, the plan required numerical superiority, specifically in the attack on Ottawa City, and they had no

way to guarantee their ability to provide such manpower. Third, the plan required simultaneous action, or at least close synchronization, of large groups of men over a large area. The plan's success rested on the ability of the Fenians to conduct a timely mobilization and rapidly move reinforcements after the attacks. As Brigadier General C. Carroll Tevis later correctly pointed out in correspondence to Sweeny, a large massing of troops near the border would undoubtedly alert the Canadians, who would have time to respond. In order to prevent detection, the Fenians were to assemble in small groups and travel to their locations independently, with only key leaders aware of the full plan and their destinations.[50]

Overall, Sweeny's plan would have been difficult to execute for an experienced army under perfect conditions. Despite the fact that the Fenian Army was composed of a large number of veterans, it was untested and had never had the opportunity to train or operate as an army. Expecting this Fenian army to conduct such large maneuvers in such a large space with little room for error or delay in the middle of winter was unrealistic. Although the plan never came to fruition, it illustrated Sweeny's aggressiveness, his sweeping goals, and his over-confidence in his ability to assemble a large amount of men and traverse the distances required to achieve success.

The plan was doomed by its strategic weaknesses. Similar to the Patriots' plans, the Fenians simply did not have the means or ways to achieve their ends. They overestimated the willingness of the United States to get involved in a fight for Irish independence. Sweeny and those that followed him believed that by invading Canada, the Fenians would be able to establish a free Irish state, gain recognition from the United

States, and backed by the United States, wage a war with Great Britain to bring independence to the Irish homeland. This simply was not possible.[51]

The Campobello Island Raid

Further complicating matters, although the Roberts-Sweeny faction had taken control of the Fenian Brotherhood, John O'Mahony still commanded the loyalty of a significant number of Fenians. Among them was a man named Bernard Doran Killian, a journalist originally from Missouri. He was opposed to the Roberts-Sweeny faction and seemed to hold a personal enmity toward Sweeny in particular. This may have been the result of Sweeny's Civil War service. It is possible that the two fought against each other at the Battle of Wilson's Creek in 1861. Killian successfully convinced O'Mahony that they needed to preempt Sweeny's plan in order to restore his standing in the Brotherhood and diminish Roberts and Sweeny. To this end, O'Mahony decided to conduct a raid against Campobello Island at Killian's urging. Historian Cheryl MacDonald argues that Killian believed the island was disputed territory between the United States and Canada. If the Fenians captured the island, they hoped the United States would support them as it had done with Texas in 1846. If the island could gain legal recognition as Irish territory, it could be used as a base to attack Canada. A possession of New Brunswick, the small island was located just off the coast of Maine.[52]

There were a number of problems with the preparation and execution of this plan. In March 1866, despite the promise of thousands of men and equipment, Killian mustered a paltry three hundred men for the attack.[53] In April, once on the island, the men made relatively minor mischief. There was no over-arching design or objective. While Sweeny

had formulated a flawed, but reasoned and thorough plan, O'Mahony's raid was characterized by hasty preparation and improvisation.

The British responded with a show of force, driving the Fenians from the island without bloodshed. Additionally, in early April, after pressure from the British government, the United States sent troops led by Major General George Meade, the victor of Gettysburg, to quietly quell the disturbance in Maine. This showed that the United States and Britain were both determined to maintaining order along the border.[54] After Campobello, Secretary of State William Seward reaffirmed to Great Britain that the United States would enforce the Neutrality Act.[55]

The failure at Campobello had a negative impact on morale in the Fenian Brotherhood. Killian was expelled from the organization, and O'Mahony officially resigned.[56] Stephens had a similar fall from grace. He arrived in Manhattan in early May 1866, and despite his many scheduled public appearances and addresses, his influence was permanently diminished. He continued to be active in the organization but was unable to steer the Fenians away from future invasions into Canada.[57]

The Raid of Fort Erie and the Battle of Ridgeway

Although Sweeny seemed vindicated by the poor showing of the O'Mahony faction in the Campobello debacle, he recognized there was a need to improve morale with a Fenian win. He also hoped to attract hesitant Irish nationalists to the cause with some early victories. With this in mind, Sweeny revisited his original plans for a winter attack into Canada and modified it for the summer months. Unable to cross over frozen rivers, the Fenians procured small boats and a tug. Sweeny's plan was to invade Quebec and establish a Fenian capital in the town of Sherbrooke. Meanwhile, another column

would converge on Ontario from Milwaukee, Detroit, and Chicago in order to draw forces away from the main attack in the east. Smaller units would destroy sections of the Grand Trunk Railroad to impede the movement of British and Canadian reinforcements while groups from Ohio and New York crossed into Canada via boat. Even if they were unsuccessful in disabling the railroad, the Fenians would still be well positioned on the Niagara peninsula, an area bordered by the Niagara River to the east, the Welland Canal to the west, Lake Ontario to the north, and Lake Erie to the south.[58] Much like his original plan, this scheme was a large maneuver that required significant manpower, material, and command and control capabilities. Securing all three would be hampered by the U.S. government.

Sweeny began assembling forces in the middle of May 1866, but several obstacles stood in his way. Because of the rift in the Fenian movement and the Campobello failure, the turnout for Sweeny's mobilization was significantly diminished. Additionally, U.S. marshals intercepted several weapons shipments. The Fenians made efforts to maintain secrecy, but due to the large number of obviously Irish men moving toward the border and the infiltration of British spies, they were unsuccessful.[59] As a result, Sweeny had to alter his plans again because of decreased manpower. He ordered the Midwest contingent from Milwaukee, Detroit, and Chicago to muster in Buffalo instead.[60]

Once the forces were assembled, Sweeny selected Colonel John O'Neill to lead the feint into the west. A Civil War cavalryman from Nashville, Tennessee, O'Neill assembled roughly eight hundred men at Pratt Iron Works in Buffalo on 31 May and crossed the Niagara River with his forces late that evening. By the early morning hours of 1 June, he had landed a force of six hundred men near the village of Fort Erie in the

southeast corner of the Niagara peninsula.[61] In response to the Fenian landing, both federal and local authorities on the U.S. side of the border acted quickly to disrupt the flow of additional troops and material to O'Neill. The *USS Michigan* blocked traffic across the Niagara, while Buffalo mayor Chandler T. Wells shut down all ferries into Canada and the U.S. district attorney William Dart announced that all ships leaving Buffalo required inspection prior to departure.[62]

In addition to these unwelcome developments, O'Neill's scouts informed him that the Fenians faced twenty-five hundred Canadian militiamen. These men had been dispatched to the Welland Canal in the last few days of May. Despite their poor training and lack of quality equipment, their morale was high. Overall command was exercised by British Colonel George Peacocke who led the militia along with a small group of British regulars at Chippewa. Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Booker was in command of the militia at Port Colborne.[63] O'Neill quickly learned that the Canadian/British forces were moving toward him in two columns, one from Chippewa to the north and one from Port Colborne to the west. To make matters worse, about one hundred Fenians deserted during the day of 1 June, reducing his force to five hundred. O'Neill had to destroy excess weapons before making his next move.[64]

O'Neill decided to move into an ambush position to defeat one of the enemy columns before the other was in a position to support. At 2200 on 1 June, he moved westward to meet the Canadian militia moving from Port Colborne. The Fenians met the column the next morning, about three miles east of the town of Ridgeway. An aggressive Fenian attack, superior U.S. weapons, and poor decisions by Booker resulted in a Fenian victory. Booker and his men retreated back to Port Colborne.[65] The American

government, while having foreknowledge of the possible raid, ordered Meade to the border only after they received word of O'Neill's crossing into Canada. Meade was given a force of twelve hundred men, too small to adequately address the situation. Meade hoped his presence alone would defuse the situation.[66]

Without additional Fenian troops en route, O'Neill decided to return to Fort Erie, destroying bridges along the way for protection. Upon returning to Fort Erie, the Fenians encountered about one hundred militia whom Peacocke had sent to patrol along the Niagara by boat. They had disembarked and were moving along land. The Fenians engaged the militia and after fighting for several hours, the militia retreated to their boat and departed. O'Neill then moved into a fort, left over from the War of 1812, just south of Fort Erie.[67]

In the meantime, Peacocke's column made slow progress from Chippewa, but his large force threatened O'Neill's remaining Fenians. On the American side, Meade arrived to survey the situation and immediately requested that martial law be instituted along with the ability to call upon state authorities for assistance in order to deal with the five hundred Fenians on the shore and the reported eight hundred on their way. The federal government denied both requests. Meade proceeded to visit Buffalo, New York, and St. Albans, Vermont, where he left a company of troops to block reinforcements to O'Neill. In Buffalo, U.S. District Attorney William A. Dart worked with the commander of the naval steamer USS *Michigan* to stop reinforcements from crossing the Niagara River. Dart pressed two tugboats into U.S. service to patrol the river with the USS *Michigan*. In St. Albans, U.S. Marshal H. H. Henry confiscated all suspicious packages and munitions with the help of a small Army detachment of twenty-one men. Because of the large force

approaching and inability of the Fenians to send reinforcements or supplies, O'Neill ordered a retreat. The movement back to the United States began on the morning of 3 June. However, one of Dart's tugboats detained the Fenians in the Niagara River as they attempted to cross in their tug and small boats. The officers were taken aboard the USS *Michigan*, and all were held until the Canadian government announced they would not seek extradition of them. On 5 June, the British minister in Washington Frederick Bruce demanded that Secretary Seward provide an official U.S. response to the Fenian forays into Canada. President Andrew Johnson issued a proclamation reaffirming adherence to the Neutrality Act and warning citizens against participating in armed action against Canada.[68]

There were three immediate effects of the operation. First, Irish-Americans were bolstered by what was claimed to be a victory, and as Sweeny predicted, many more volunteered for service with the Fenians. At the same time, the Canadians showed a renewed solidarity as they unified behind the common threat of the Fenians. Finally, the U.S. government showed they were committed to cracking down on violations of the Neutrality Act by arresting known and suspected Fenians. On 6 June, Sweeny himself was arrested in St. Albans, Vermont. Roberts was arrested the next day in New York City.[69]

With Sweeny incarcerated, Samuel Patterson Spears, one of his subordinates, attempted to carry on with the plan. On 7 June, he led a raid into Canada East. His forces, numbering about one thousand men, advanced from the Lake Champlain area about a mile into Canadian territory. The first day was relatively uneventful. However, by 8 June, Spears received word of the mobilization of the local militia, as well as a U.S. Army

detachment sent by Meade on the border that was prepared to arrest neutrality violators.[70] Spears took no action against rail infrastructure, which allowed Canadian forces to arrive on the morning of 9 June. Roughly 80 percent of Spears' troops deserted. These deserters were promptly arrested when they returned to the United States, The remaining Fenians stayed in place until the Canadians emplaced artillery, and it became obvious that standing and fighting would be futile. They retreated back to the United States. Only a few shots were fired, and neither side suffered casualties in the brief engagement. Meade ended the last attempt of further invasion or reinforcements on 8 June when he ordered the removal of a few hundred Fenians near St. Albans. By this time, the number of Fenians in the area had grown to around five thousand and many were unable to afford transport back home. The stranded Fenians applied for government assistance, which they received if they pledged to refrain from future hostilities. Too few Fenians accepted the offer, however. In light of the growing anxiety of Canadian officials and the local population on both sides of the border due to the large Fenian presence, Meade approved their transportation without the pledge on 12 June.[71]

The United States aggressively enforced the Neutrality Act during this episode. President Johnson sent Meade to the border to handle the disturbance. Army units and U.S. marshals along the border arrested violators, and Meade sent forces to disband groups of Fenians that he suspected were gathering to reinforce Spears' men.[72] However, the U.S. government did not aggressively pursue, arrest, or bring to trial many of the Fenians. The pro-Fenian and pro-Irish voting bloc was too strong, especially for the Democrats. Members of Congress pandered to Irish voters by publicly supporting Fenian leaders and introducing legislation favorable to the Fenian cause. One of the most

damaging to Anglo-American relations occurred when legislation was introduced by Massachusetts Congressman Nathaniel Banks to annex eastern Canada to the United States. The British now feared war if the United States passed the bill. The bill was rejected in committee, allaying British fears, as well as the Johnson Administrations. Johnson was in a difficult political position. With upcoming elections, he did not want to offend Irish voters but wished to avoid hostilities with the British. However, many Fenians and their supporters saw Johnson's inaction as betrayal and painted him as pro-British.[73] Indeed, O'Neill later stated that their failure was due to "fire in the rear, not fire in the front."[74]

Johnson, aware of growing public backlash, decided to make concessions to the Fenians. He pardoned many, removed District Attorney Dart from office, refused Canadian requests for reparations, and ordered Army quartermasters to return weapons seized from the Fenians. These measures alarmed Canadian officials, who now began to fear rising pro-Fenian sentiment in the United States. Many Fenians were still incarcerated in Canada awaiting trial or execution. Secretary Seward wrote to British Minister Bruce in October 1866, recommending clemency to condemned Fenians along with a veiled threat of force if it was not granted. Britain commuted the death sentences to hard labor as a result.[75]

Eccles Hill Raid

After the failed raids of 1866 and the removal of Stephens from leadership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States was in disarray. Over the next several years, Fenianism was in rapid decline on both sides of the Atlantic. Numerous leadership changes and several false starts for uprisings in Ireland,

and the proactive measures taken by the American and British governments prevented any progress for the Fenians.[76]

Events since the 1866 Battle of Ridgeway had tested and changed Anglo-American relations, which would impact any Fenian chance for success. In early January 1869, President Johnson nominated John Savage, a well-known Fenian, to a consul vacancy in Leeds. Johnson had made the nomination as an empty gesture of support for an ally, knowing that it would not be accepted. The British saw it as an insult. British indignation was relieved, however, once Congress withheld all of Johnson's nominations as a show of their displeasure with the president after his failed impeachment. In March 1869, Ulysses S. Grant became president. Tensions were high as both countries awaited signs for how Grant would approach Anglo-American relations. It was well known that Grant harbored resentment over perceived British interference in the Civil War. The British feared he would demand Canadian territory as recompense.[77]

The first test of the relationship came when Grant nominated James Haggerty, a known Fenian, as consul to Glasgow. This nomination, however, was tempered by Grant's nomination of former U.S. District Attorney William A. Dart as the Canadian consul. The British requested Haggerty's withdrawal to the new Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, which was respectfully declined. The relationship began to turn around quickly soon after. Canadian officials received intelligence that Fenians were gathering arms near the border in early 1869, and the British minister to Washington, Edward Thornton, promptly informed Fish. British fears eased when Fish reported back that military forces would be encamped near the border and hired private detectives were investigating the Fenians. It proved to the British that Grant was willing to do what was

needed to secure the border. However, once the date of the supposed invasion passed without incident, Grant fired the detectives.[78]

Furthermore, the British and American diplomats were able to remove one of the Fenians' more subtle policies to invoke the eruption of a transatlantic war. In May 1870, the Anglo-American Naturalization Treaty brought an end to the longstanding dispute over expatriation. The Fenians had long hoped to invoke war either by Britain's refusal to acknowledge U.S. citizenship of captured Fenians or by the U.S. granting Fenians belligerent status, recognizing any seized territory by the Fenians as Irish. The Fenians would now stand alone.[79] That, however, did not stop O'Neill from trying to reignite Fenian passion and channel it into action.

Hoping to conduct another invasion in Canada, O'Neill understood he first had to reunite the Fenians.[80] In an address to the Fenian Brotherhood in New York in February 1868, O'Neill criticized forces working against the Brotherhood from the inside. He stated, "we cannot fight England while a concealed adversary is sapping our strength from within."[81] Specifically, he blamed newspapers, such as the *Irish Republic*, a publication in Chicago. He accused it of "sowing the seeds of discord" in its editorial criticisms of Fenian leadership. He also suspected the tainted influence of O'Mahony and Stephens.[82]

However, Fenian problems probably had less to do with unity than funding. The Fenians were broke.[83] O'Neill was particularly incensed by a story that ran in the *Irish Republic* on 18 January 1868, urging readers to support neither faction (Robert-Sweeny or the former O'Mahony faction) until they reconciled into a united Fenian Brotherhood.[84] Although O'Neill blamed such articles for lack of support within the

organization, historians Patrick Steward and Brian P. McGovern identify two main reasons for the lack of interest and funding. First, after 1866, most Irish-Americans simply did not trust the Fenian Brotherhood. After the failures in Canada, few believed financing the Fenians was worthwhile. Second, improved social mobility and a postwar economic rebound provided better opportunities for Irish Americans in the United States.[85] Indeed, many current and former Fenian leaders experienced success in American politics and understandably showed less interest in revolution. However, there was still widespread Irish dissatisfaction that was channeled toward American actors through increased terrorism by such groups as the Molly Maguires. O'Neill, though, believed the Fenian Brotherhood had been united by the Battle of Ridgeway, and it was his goal to recapture that unity.[86]

In early 1870, O'Neill adopted a modified version of Sweeny's plan from 1866. In this version, as before, he would send forces in a two-pronged attack, one attacking the Niagara peninsula while his main thrust pushed into Quebec. However, this time, instead of attempting to establish an Irish Republic capital in Sherbrooke, his target was the small village of Saint Jean on the Richelieu River. Wanting to send a message to the British, he selected as the day of the attack 24 May, the birthday of Queen Victoria.[87] Mustering the limited resources that he had available, O'Neill managed to assemble six hundred to eight hundred poorly equipped Fenians in various locations in New York and Vermont by the middle of May. O'Neill believed he could muster six thousand to arrive for the offensive, but those numbers failed to materialize. The force moving on Saint Jean from St. Albans, Vermont, was expected to number one thousand men. However, O'Neill was met by a comparatively paltry one hundred men at St. Albans on 24 May.[88]

On 25 May, O'Neill launched his attack. Upon approaching the border, O'Neill took up positions on the American side and readied a team of about forty Fenians to cross. In a bizarre decision, however, O'Neill attempted to enlist the help of a U.S. marshal. The marshal agreed to carry a letter to the Canadians communicating O'Neill's intentions to abide by the standard laws of war. The marshal made his way less than five hundred meters north of the border to Eccles Hill, which the Canadians occupied, and returned when the message had been delivered. O'Neill then sent his team of forty Fenians across the border. Upon crossing, they were well within rifle range, and the Canadians immediately opened fire, killing two Fenians. Without delay, the marshal arrested O'Neill for violating the neutrality law and escorted him from the scene. John Boyle O'Reilly assumed command in O'Neill's absence; however, he conducted no further attacks that day. O'Neill spent four months in prison.[89]

Early the next morning on 26 May, one of O'Neill's lieutenants, Owen Starr, led over two hundred men into Huntingdon County, Quebec, and began building defenses about half a mile north of the border. Starr was determined to establish defenses and repel attacking Canadians. Starr hoped to inspire Fenians to the cause by holding the position while under attack. An hour and a half later, a force consisting of well-trained British regulars and Canadian militia advanced on the Fenian position. The poorly trained Fenians fired several rounds but retreated when the advance continued. They abandoned their weapons and returned home. There were no casualties on either side.[90]

Instead of the unifying victory he had hoped for, O'Neill was met with worse defeats than had been experienced in 1866. O'Neill had hoped that the offensive on Eccles Hill would rally flagging support for the Fenian cause like the Ridgeway Raid did

in 1866. He expected that holding any Canadian territory, even for a short time, would reinvigorate the cause. However, he could claim no triumph in 1870. Instead, it was an illustration of Fenian impotence. The United States and Great Britain took significant steps to handle this situation and deny Fenian success. First, in the days leading up to the attack, both governments had been tipped off that something was being planned. The Canadians readied their militia. Secretary Fish responded to reports by instructing commanders of vessels on the Great Lakes and soldiers at posts along the border to maintain the integrity of the U.S.-Canada border. Twenty additional regular troops were given to the U.S. marshal in Detroit when he reported Fenians in the area, and the USS *Michigan* was sent to patrol the Niagara River when reports of Fenians training in Buffalo were received. On 25 May, President Grant issued a proclamation pledging to enforce neutrality and stating violators would be arrested. After O'Neill crossed into Canada, Grant redeployed Meade with eleven artillery batteries to the border. A number of Fenians were arrested and detained and thirty tons of munitions were seized and sent to federal arsenals. British Minister Thornton was satisfied with Grant's determination to protect the border's integrity and reported such to his superiors in London. The only complaint was Grant's refusal to give free transportation to stranded Fenian supporters.[91]

While the Grant Administration aggressively enforced the Neutrality Act in 1870, it did not punish the Fenians to the fullest extent. In hopes of swaying Irish voters to the Republican Party, President Grant commuted O'Neill's sentence just before the 1870 mid-term election. Likewise, the Irish were critical to Democratic politicians in the north, and the occasional use of anti-British rhetoric or a favorable view of Fenianism could pull

in more votes than it would lose. For example, prominent Democrat and future President Grover Cleveland provided free legal representation for Fenians.[92]

The Raid in the West

In October 1871, O'Neill led a small raid along the Red River, the north-south boundary between Minnesota and North Dakota. O'Neill intended to capture needed supplies from a Hudson Bay trading post about eight hundred meters north of the border on the Red River. He then wanted to float those supplies several dozen miles north downriver to Fort Garry, North Dakota. O'Neill led a small team of fifteen men to the post, seized the supplies, and took several prisoners. However, one man escaped and made his way to Pembina, North Dakota, where he informed Army Captain Lloyd Wheaton of the situation. Wheaton chose to send a messenger to negotiate a peaceful withdrawal. However, when the Fenians captured the messenger and refused to negotiate, Wheaton and his men promptly rode to the post and detained eleven of the Fenians as they tried to flee.[93] This was the last Fenian Raid into Canada. The Fenian Brotherhood was unable to conduct any future attacks.

Conclusion

Throughout their existence, the Fenians used the United States as a safe haven for operations against the British Empire. While they were ultimately unsuccessful, they were able to use their American freedoms to act on their unhappiness with the British and, initially at least, were able to raise forces and develop their plans. As the United States began arresting and prosecuting those that violated the Neutrality Law the Fenians

were slow to realize that the government would deny the use of U.S. territory as a safe haven.

In an effort to enforce neutrality, the United States punished many of the perpetrators of the Fenian Raids. Most were handled with arrests or brief imprisonments. However, the United States had a complicated balancing act to perform. They had to weigh enforcing neutrality to ensure border stability against respecting individual rights such as freedom of speech and assembly. Additionally, shrewd politicians realized that it was wise to respect the Irish-American voting bloc while at the same time making the point that the Fenians could expect no assistance from the U.S. government. As a result, some of the punishments were half measures. Grant commuted O'Neill's sentence just before the 1870 elections. Other politicians courted the Irish vote as well.[94]

The American notion of balancing individual freedom with national security as well as political pandering to voters did not always sit well with the British government. Despite the British foreign minister's calls for action, Secretary of State William Seward insisted on upholding the constitutional rights of the Fenians to speak and assemble freely after the Brotherhood went public at the Cincinnati Convention in 1863.[95] The Johnson and Grant Administrations' pardoning of Fenians in order to avoid antagonizing Irish-Americans was a great irritant to the British. Many of those pardoned, like O'Neill, soon returned to the fight. Both administrations nominated known Fenians to consulate positions, which Great Britain perceived as insults. Additionally, action to enforce the Neutrality Act often was not carried out until the law had been broken, even when Canadian and British officials requested action beforehand.[96] There was also the bizarre incident during the 1870 Eccles Hill raid. A U.S. marshal at the scene did not arrest

O'Neill for violating the Neutrality Act until after the shooting began.[97] Fenians who directly violated the Neutrality Act, though, were punished for it by the United States. The British may have desired intervention sooner, but they accepted what the United States was ultimately willing to enforce.

The Canadian government was decidedly more severe with captured Fenians. Many received death sentences after their capture. However, prior to being carried out, the death sentences were commuted to twenty-year imprisonment terms with hard labor. Perhaps this was an effort to deny the Fenians martyrs to avenge.[98] It may also have been an attempt to avoid a situation similar to the McLeod affair. In either case, the situation was defused, and peace was maintained.

One noteworthy example of cross-border cooperation involved Captain Wheaton, the Army officer garrisoned at Pembina. When he entered Canada to apprehend O'Neill in 1871, he had standing authorization from the Canadian government to use force against Fenians in Manitoba if necessary.[99] This willingness to allow federal troops from a neighboring nation to assist in border security was remarkable in North America at that time. Of course, Manitoba was a very small province that had only entered the Confederation in 1870. Allowing foreign troops there was not the same as allowing them in Ontario or Quebec, but the fact remained that American troops were enforcing American neutrality on Canadian soil, an example of proactive trans-border cooperation due to mutual interest in border stability.[100]

Ultimately, the Fenian Raids failed to advance the cause of Irish independence. Indeed, they served to inadvertently foster Canadian unity, and in some small way may have contributed to Canadian Confederation in 1867. The struggle for Irish independence

would continue into the next century. Similar to the Patriots' experience, the Fenians failed due to a lack of stable, cohesive leadership and a lack of adequate popular support. They also failed because the United States and Canada cooperated to maintain peace and bring about an end to the conflict.

The actions of the Fenians strained Anglo-American relations. The United States and Great Britain, like in the Patriot War, used diplomacy and military force to ensure border security. As calls for Canadian Confederation grew and British regular troops were being pulled out of Canada, the Canadian militia stepped in to protect their territory. The United States dispatched military force to enforce the Neutrality Act under both President Johnson and President Grant. Diplomacy was effective in neutralizing Fenian attempts to use the United States as a safe haven. Great Britain in turn commuted Fenian death sentences to appease U.S. concerns. The border remained intact, and Anglo-American relations were stronger.

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[1] Doolin, 4, 9.

[2] Ibid., 20.

[3] Michael Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009), 1.

[4] Doolin, 8-9; Sim, *A Union Forever*, 97.

[5] See, 70-71, 77.

[6] Ibid., 78.

[7] Ibid., 69.

[8] Morton, 41.

[9] See, 78-79; Morton, 46-47.

[10] Ibid.

[11] See, 79-80.

[12] Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Kingsport Press, 1969), 40-42; See, 80-81.

[13] See, 81-82.

[14] Ibid., 83.

[15] Ibid., 86-84.

[16] Ibid., 87-88, 92.

[17] Ibid., 143.

[18] Skelton, 134-135.

[19] Kretchik, 60-61.

[20] Skelton, 135.

[21] Kretchik, 70-75.

[22] Doolin, 20.

[23] Thomas E. Hachey, Joseph M. Hernon, Jr., and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Experience: A Concise History* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 100-101; Burleigh, 1; Doolin, 80-81.

[24] Doolin, 44-47.

[25] Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, 102; Doolin, 48.

[26] Doolin, 49.

[27] Sim, "Filibusters, Fenians, and a Contested Neutrality," 266-267; Doolin, 23-24.

[28] Doolin, 46, 53, 61.

[29] Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, 102; Doolin, 78.

[30] Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood Giving a Faithful Report of the Principal Events from 1855 to 1867 Written, at the Request of Friends by Joseph Denieffe, To Which is Added in Corroboration, an Appendix Containing Important Letters and Papers Written by James Stephens, John*

O'Mahony, John Mitchel, Thomas J. Kelly and Other Leaders of the Movement (New York: The Gael Publishing Co., 1906), 87; Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, 102.

[31] Doolin, 66.

[32] Ibid., 51-52.

[33] Ibid., 102-103.

[34] Ibid., 111.

[35] Steward and McGovern, 29-32; Doolin, 104-105.

[36] Doolin, 72-73.

[37] Ibid., 72-74, 117, 128, 130.

[38] *Proceedings of the Second National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood Held in Cincinnati, Ohio, January, 1865* (Philadelphia, PA: James Gibbons, 1865), 55.

[39] Doolin, 117.

[40] Ibid., 121-122.

[41] Ibid., 117-118.

[42] Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, 104; Doolin, 119-120.

[43] Doolin, 123, 125-126.

[44] Hachey, Hernon, and McCaffrey, 104; Doolin, 128, 130.

[45] Thomas Sweeny to William Roberts, u.d., in *Thomas William Sweeny Papers*, New York Public Archives, (microfilm), 1-3.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 9, 11.

[48] Ibid., 11.

[49] Ibid., 11-12.

[50] C. Carroll Tevis to Thomas Sweeny, u.d., in *Thomas William Sweeny Papers*, New York Public Archives, (microfilm), 1-3.

[51] JCS, JP 3-0, II-4-II-5.

[52] Steward and McGovern. 109; Cheryl MacDonald, *Canada Under Attack: Irish American Veterans of the Civil War and Their Fenian Campaign to Conquer Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer Publishers, 2015), 38-40; Doolin, 163-164.

[53] Doolin, 167.

[54] George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade: Major General United States Army*, ed. George Gordon Meade (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 285; Doolin, 168-170.

[55] Steward and McGovern 118.

[56] Doolin, 171.

[57] Steward and McGovern, 120-122.

[58] Ibid., 117.

[59] Ibid., 122-123.

[60] Ibid., 123.

[61] Francis Wayland Campbell, *The Fenian Invasions of Canada of 1866 and 1870 and the Operations of the Montreal Militia Brigade in Connection Therewith: A Lecture Delivered Before the Montreal Military Institute, April 23rd, 1898* (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, 1904), 15; John O'Neill, *Official Report of Gen. John O'Neill, President of the Fenian Brotherhood, on the Attempt to Invade Canada May 25, 1870. The Preparations Therefor, and the Cause of Its Failure, With a Sketch of His Connection with the Organization and the Motives Which Led Him to Join It; Also A Report of the Battle of Ridgeway, Canada West, Fought June 2d, 1866, by Colonel Booker, Commanding the Queen's Own, and Other Canadian Troops, and Colonel John O'Neill, Commanding the Fenians* (New York: John J. Foster, 1870), 37-38; Steward and McGovern, 122, 124.

[62] Steward and McGovern, 125.

[63] Ibid., 124-125.

[64] O'Neill, *Official Report*, 38-39

[65] O'Neill, *Official Report*, 39; Steward and McGovern, 125-128.

[66] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 144.

[67] O'Neill, *Official Report*, 39-40; Steward and McGovern, 128-129.

[68] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 144-146, 148-150; O'Neill, *Official Report*, 40-41; Steward and McGovern, 131-132.

[69] Steward and McGovern, 132-134.

[70] Ibid., 134-135.

[71] Steward and McGovern, 135-136; Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 149-150.

[72] Steward and McGovern, 135.

[73] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 153, 179-190; Steward and McGovern, 136-144.

[74] Quoted in Steward and McGovern, 138.

[75] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 198-214; Steward and McGovern, 140-144.

[76] Steward and McGovern, 155-179.

[77] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 286-296.

[78] Ibid., 286-296.

[79] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 248-281; Steward and McGovern, 200.

[80] Steward and McGovern, 194.

[81] John O'Neill, *Address of Gen. John O'Neill, President F. B. To the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood on the State of the Organization and its Attempted Disruption* (New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1868), 2-3.

[82] O'Neill, *Address*, 3-5.

[83] Steward and McGovern, 194.

[84] O'Neill, *Address*, 9-10.

[85] Steward and McGovern, 194.

[86] Ibid., 199, 211-212, 220.

[87] Ibid., 200-201.

[88] MacDonald, 95-99; Steward and McGovern, 201-202.

[89] *The Fenian Raid of 1870 by Reporters at the Scenes* (Montreal: Witness Printing House, 1871), 15-16; Steward and McGovern, 202-204.

[90] Steward and McGovern, 204-205.

[91] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 302-309; Steward and McGovern, 200, 202, 205.

[92] Steward and McGovern, 204-206.

[93] Ibid., 210.

[94] Ibid., 204-206.

[95] Doolin, 72-73.

[96] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, 198-214, 286-296, 304-307; Steward and McGovern, 140-144, 202.

[97] Steward and McGovern, 202-204.

[98] Ibid., 143.

[99] Ibid., 210.

[100] See, 89-90.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Despite ambitious plans, the Patriots and the Fenians were unsuccessful. This failure was primarily a consequence of the unrealistic goals of both groups. Their inability to link tactical actions with strategic objectives through realistic operational planning doomed their enterprises to failure. Contributing to this failure were internal factors within the Patriots and Fenians, the effectiveness of U.S. and British military actions, and developments in Anglo-American relations.

Internal Factors

There were three major internal factors that contributed to the failure of the Patriots and the Fenians: disjointed or fractured leadership, lack of truly widespread popular support, and lack of funding. All three factors were interrelated and made success unlikely. Without unifying, dependable leadership, popular support is difficult to attain. Without popular support, the Patriots and Fenians had difficulty raising the funds needed to purchase material and raise an army.[1]

Issues with leadership were evident in both groups. The Patriots had a very loose organization. In many ways, the uprisings in Upper and Lower Canada were separate from each other.[2] Although a group of leaders conducted a conference in Buffalo in December 1837 after some of the initial fighting, there was no clear identifiable leader to whom the Patriots looked for direction. To make matters worse, many leaders had little or no military expertise. Indeed, the Patriots found themselves in a dilemma. A loose organization was more difficult for the British to infiltrate and deal with. However, it also

complicated the Patriots' effectiveness. As a result, they were unable to devise a plan that had a realistic chance for operational success. The most acute example of shortcomings in leadership was Rensselaer Van Rensselaer. His poor leadership at Navy Island led to a large number of desertions. When they left a few weeks later, the Patriots had nothing to show for their efforts.[3]

For the Fenians, the rift in leadership in early 1865 was the product of fractured organizational vision. The Roberts-Sweeny faction nearly tore the Brotherhood apart by attacking O'Mahony and Stephens. Of course, the irony here was that O'Mahony—who vehemently disagreed with the plan to attack Canada—helped plan and conduct the first raid into Canada, led by Killian. The Campobello debacle, however, not only injured O'Mahony and Killian, it did irreparable damage to the cause. While O'Neill fared better at Ridgeway, there was no ability for the Fenians to capitalize on any victory, even one as exaggerated in its effects as the Fenian "victory" at Ridgeway was. There was no way they could make it a tactical victory by holding ground. This killed whatever hope there was of achieving their operational end state, and thus they were unable to achieve a strategic victory against the British. It would take six years before O'Neill would try anything again, and those attempts failed to live up to his previous, short-lived success.[4]

Poor leadership in both organizations also failed to inspire the masses. Without popular support, the failure of the Patriots and Fenians cannot be put solely on a single individual within the organization. Neither organization was capable of implementing their complete strategy. The Patriots' seizure of Navy Island in 1837 failed to mobilize a popular uprising in Canada. Similarly, the actions of the Fenians at Ridgeway resulted in neither an uprising in Ireland nor a war between the United States and Canada.

While the Patriots had a number of true believers in the cause, there was not widespread support for the independence movement in Canada. In fact, it appears that the majority of their support came from American citizens, but not in enough numbers to override Washington's commitment to peace. When operating in Canada, the Patriots expected the local population to come to their aid and join the fight for independence. When that did not happen, they were unable to achieve their objective.[5] The Fenians also lacked popular support. They failed to obtain sufficient support from Irish-Americans, much less that of non-Irish Americans. Furthermore, the Canadians were firmly opposed to them, viewing the Fenians as the terrorists they were.

Both the Patriots and the Fenians also had issues with recruiting. On numerous occasions, thousands of men were anticipated to answer the call to arms, but only hundreds showed up. For example, O'Neill expected more than a thousand men to gather for the Eccles Hill Raid in 1871. However, only about one hundred arrived.[6] Without sufficient numbers, neither the Patriots nor the Fenians could successfully execute their plans.

Tied to the lack of popular support was the lack of funding. This prevented both the Patriots and Fenians from procuring the weapons and equipment they needed. The Fenians promised Canadian land and livestock in return for their service (in lieu of a paycheck). Additionally, the Fenians were arguably better equipped than the Patriots. The United States had plenty of surplus weapons and equipment after the Civil War, and the Fenians were able to procure those at a decent price.[7] However, it was not enough. The British significantly overmatched them in artillery, and this became decisive on more

than one occasion. For example, the attack on Canada East in June 1866 fizzled when the Canadians brought out cannon. The Fenians turned and fled as a result.[8]

Arguably, the Patriots and Fenians were doomed even before facing their enemy. However, even though they were unlikely to succeed due to their leadership issues and lack of popular support and funding, the disturbances caused by the Patriots and Fenians did upset Anglo-American relations and had the potential to escalate tensions between the United States and Canada.

The Militaries in Action

In addition to diplomacy, an important component of the U.S. and British responses to the Patriot War and Fenian Raids was the use of the military. The forces of each nation were indispensable in resolving crises and enforcing laws such as the Neutrality Act. During the Patriot War, Major General Winfield Scott was sent to the border to deal with these issues. Leveraging his extensive experience in constabulary operations in regions facing turmoil, his actions balanced diplomacy with military action. He quelled the disturbance along the border and engaged diplomatically with British counterparts to ensure the arrest of lawbreakers and prevent a confrontation between U.S. and British forces. Interestingly, during the Patriot War in particular, regular U.S. troops were preferred to militia, not because of training, but because of sympathy that many in the militia had for the Patriot movement.[9]

During the Fenian Raids, the U.S. Army's mission to enforce neutrality was complicated by a prominent political dimension. While the Army arguably could have done more, their options were limited by American Constitutional protections. The Fenians openly recruited within the United States and publicly stated their goals.[10] They

legally purchased U.S. Army materiel that was used in their raids into Canada.[11] It is important to note that many members of the Fenian Brotherhood gained military experience in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. Despite these factors, the U.S. Army as an institution enforced neutrality. In contrast to Scott's more diplomatic actions during the Patriot War, Meade showed more forcefulness. The major reason for this was the troops available at the border. While both used regular troops, and the Army had significant institutional experience with constabulary operations, Meade had more troops at his disposal than Scott did thirty years earlier. This enabled Meade to employ greater force without having to cajole local authorities for cooperation. From the arrest of O'Neill and others for the violation of neutrality to the actions of Captain Wheaton in Manitoba, the U.S. Army was involved, acting effectively in its classic role as a border constabulary force.[12]

The Anglo-American Relationship

The Anglo-American relationship during the nineteenth century faced many challenges that were exacerbated by the actions of the Patriots and Fenians. However, there was great opportunity for cooperation. Comparing the two episodes provides insight into how the relationship between the United States and Great Britain evolved from the 1830s to the 1870s. In the 1830s during the time of the Patriot War, the two countries were still repairing their relationship after the War of 1812. Furthermore, the northern border remained unfixed and, in some places, in dispute. While an enormous amount of progress was being made, the Patriot War endangered it.

Specifically, the *Caroline* affair and the trial of Alexander McLeod were possibly the closest the countries came to war during this period. The way that the two nations

approached the McLeod trial was a very important test for Anglo-American relations, especially in the context of the concurrent dispute over the Maine border. By 1842, both disputes had been resolved, and the nations continued to coexist peacefully.[13] With the Fenian Raids, Secretary Seward threatened retaliation if clemency was not given to those Fenians facing a death sentence in Canada, and Congressman Nathaniel Banks introduced legislation for the annexation of eastern Canada. By the early 1870s, though, these two issues were resolved, and the two nations were more cooperative. A remarkable example of that cooperation is Captain Wheaton receiving permission from the Canadian government to enter Manitoba and use force.[14] It is important to note that even as this cooperation improved, disputes between the two countries did not go away. The Fenian Raids occurred just after the Civil War, and Americans remained bitter over perceived British interference on the behalf of the Confederacy. This made the level of cooperation between the two countries all the more notable.

However, the nations were not avoiding war simply out of an altruistic desire to maintain peace. Policy makers were eager to find a peaceful solution because they knew war was not in the best interest of either nation. Economic factors played a large role. It was the reason that some in Britain sympathized with the Confederate cause, and why Great Britain wanted to maintain economic ties with the United States. Likewise, the United States needed to stabilize its economy after the war, and trade with Great Britain was an important component, particularly for the southern states. Additionally, as historians Steward and McGovern point out, maintaining the empire was expensive for Great Britain. Great Britain was engaged globally, and the less they had to worry about their North American colonies, the better.[15]

Because they violated the integrity of the border, punishment was meted out for the illegal actions of the Patriots and the Fenians. In Canada, convicted Patriots were either imprisoned or executed. As these were British citizens, the U.S. government did not lodge a complaint. Patriots arrested in the United States, in contrast, largely received lighter sentences. For example, President Van Buren pardoned Mackenzie in 1840. Tensions over the treatment of prisoners arose between the two nations in the matter of Alexander McLeod. When he was arrested for the murder of Andrew Durfee and the sinking of the *Caroline*, Britain threatened war if he were convicted and received a death sentence. McLeod's acquittal eased tensions.[16] In contrast to the Patriots captured in Canada, these Fenians were American citizens. Recognizing the possibility of another crisis with the United States, the British commuted the sentences to twenty years of hard labor. This defused the situation, preventing escalation and an international incident that could have resulted in the use of force.[17]

Conclusion

The Patriot War and the Fenian Raids are relatively obscure historical events, but ones that merit examination by soldiers, diplomats, and historians. Viewed in the context of Anglo-American relations in the nineteenth century, these two conflicts were important developments in the relationship between the United States and Great Britain. The approaches that the two governments used to handle each conflict and de-escalate each situation prevented war and were significant in building the modern relationship between the United States and Great Britain and between the United States and Canada. Additionally, the Patriots' and Fenians' use of a large, undefended border and their history of unsuccessful revolutions provide insights that are applicable to modern conflict

as well as compound warfare. As with both the Patriots and the Fenians, their inability to adequately use force or garner support from a great power contributed to their failure. These case studies can give modern instruction on how an irregular force can be undermined by a cooperative powers employing effective border security forces and diplomacy.

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[1] Doolin, 51-52.

[2] Tiffany, 18.

[3] Mann, 63-66; McLaughlin, *The Patriot War Along the New-York-Canada Border*, 25-28.

[4] Steward and McGovern, 109; Doolin, 163-164.

[5] McLaughlin, *The Patriot War Along the New-York-Canada Border*, 57-58.

[6] Steward and McGovern, 201-202.

[7] Doolin, 72-73.

[8] Steward and McGovern, 201-202.

[9] Scott, 307-308; Peskin, 17-26.

[10] Doolin, 72-73.

[11] Steward and McGovern, 112.

[12] Ibid., 210.

[13] Jones, 180.

[14] Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations*, 180-181, 205-206; Steward and McGovern, 210.

[15] Steward and McGovern, 231.

[16] Howard Jones and Donald Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny: Anglo-American Relations in the 1840s* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997), 63.

[17] Brian Jenkins, *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State, 1858-1874* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 63-65.

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