

LEADERSHIP AND TACTICS DURING THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN
OF THE WAR OF 1812

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

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ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP AND TACTICS DURING THE NORTHERN CAMPAIGN OF THE WAR OF 1812, by MAJ Joseph A. Loar, 126 pages.

American military historians have identified a trend in the US Army to start wars unprepared and ultimately emerge victorious having improved along the way. The War of 1812 set the standard in showing up unprepared, learning in early defeat, and emerging with a valid claim of martial competence. Historians tend to focus on the popular wars such as the Civil War and the World Wars, and forget the War of 1812. This forgotten war took place in the midst of profound changes in western military affairs. As the wars in Europe and North America ended, warfare once again stood at the precipice of change. This thesis identifies the ways in which these concepts improved, why they improved, and how leaders made the changes. It uses the evidence available to show that the Army learned from its mistakes and implemented changes. Leaders at all levels identified failures and made changes without any senior leader taking full ownership of any of the mistakes, mostly blaming circumstances or other leaders. During the northern campaigns, from the Niagara to Lake Champlain between 1812 and 1814, the Madison administration made annual changes to the force leadership and logistics systems hoping to improve the fighting force.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American military historians have identified a trend in the US Army to start wars unprepared and ultimately emerge victorious having improved along the way. The first war for the nation set the standard in showing up unprepared, learning in early defeats, and emerging with a valid claim of martial competence. Most historians as well as Americans tend to focus on the more popular wars such as the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, and forget the War of 1812. This war took place in the midst of profound changes in how western nations fought wars from tactics and formations, to leadership, technology, and national intent. As the wars in Europe and North America ended, warfare once again stood at the precipice of change. While much study has gone into the evolution of tactics, training, leadership, and weapons systems in the other wars our nation has fought, historians have invested very little discussion in the tactics used during the War of 1812 in North America and the effect they had on future wars.

This thesis aims to identify the ways in which these concepts improved, why they improved, and with what model these improvements were made. It uses the evidence available to show that the Army learned from its mistakes and implemented those changes. Leaders at all levels identified failures and made changes without any senior leader taking full ownership of any of the mistakes, mostly blaming circumstances or other leaders. During the northern campaigns, from the Niagara to Lake Champlain between 1812 and 1814, the Madison administration made annual changes to the force leadership and logistics systems, hoping to improve the fighting force. In Canada and along the Niagara in New York, many locally connected historians have studied the

battles in the northern campaign in much detail. Their work has reached a crescendo in recent years, detailing every aspect of battle from the national leadership to the soldiers fighting and the civilians affected. These historians have clarified much about the battles that occurred. Within these works, it appears that significant improvement in training and a better grasp of tactics was apparent in the American forces and leadership near the end of the war as compared to the beginning.

This thesis investigates one significant battle each year from 1812-1814. It analyzes the preparation, the fight, and the aftermath with a focus on broader tactics and formations used from the beginning of each battle to its climax, while recognizing the impact of leadership. The focus is the specific identification of shortcomings on the part of the battle leadership, whether the changes had any tangible effects, or if the force just improved from experience verses actual changes in the conduct of the war. The thesis examines the conditions politically that led to the U.S. conducting this war with an unprepared Army, untrained volunteers, and a grand militia only on paper. It addresses training with regard to discipline and tactics to discuss clearly the way in which the United States Army prepared for and fought battles. Finally, it examines leader impact as the keystone that implements or inhibits change. It answers the question, “How did U.S. Army leaders change their tactics and training methods between 1812 and 1815, why did they change, and to what effect did those changes influence the fight?” To begin, one must understand how the U.S. Army and its governing administration entered into the fight in the first place.

The United States was involved in trade disputes with Great Britain and France because of U.S. neutrality during the Napoleonic Wars. In the first decade of the 1800s,

the Jefferson administration enacted an embargo intending to punish the French and British for their economic mistreatment of the U.S. While the embargo did more to injure the U.S. economy than the British or the French, it was one of the early steps toward war. The British Royal Navy repeatedly kidnapped U.S. Sailors and forced them into her service. Additionally, Great Britain regularly stopped American cargo vessels to confiscate American goods intended for sale in ports under French control. In continental North America, the British were arming and assisting Native American forces in the Northwest Territory in an effort to disrupt the fur trade along the Mississippi over to Detroit. These were among the several reasons the Madison administration used as its casus belli.¹ Several historians have offered hidden agendas by the administration to include a desire for expansion and eventual control of all of North America.² Only nine years prior, President Jefferson signed the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, expanding the United States by more than double its previous land mass. Expansion was most definitely a National Security measure embraced by the Democratic - Republican Party. Some in the administration felt that expanding into British Canada would remove the threat of British forces on the border, as well as neutralize external support to Native American forces led by Tecumseh.³ The means by which the administration hoped to accomplish these ends was a small, poorly-trained regular army frequently led by politically-appointed officers and a few aging Revolutionary War veterans. State militias supported the regular force; however, they had no constitutional requirement to fight outside the United States by military order, but rather only by volunteering to cross the border. A volunteer force made up of underpaid, and undertrained soldiers filled the remaining gaps. These forces also had mostly aged and politically appointed leaders with minimal

combat experience. Politically, the nation divided itself between Federalist and Democratic-Republican party lines. Jefferson's Republicans believed that, when called upon, militias of the many states could defeat any modern force upon attack. Jefferson claimed that the militia could seize Canada by merely marching.⁴ On the other side, the Federalists believed that a well-trained militia and a substantial, but small, standing force was all the nation needed for its defense. They believed the militia could manage the fight until a properly trained regular force could muster, train, and take over the fight, dissolving subsequent to victory as it had following the Revolutionary War. Both parties used this purported fear of a standing army as a political tool to hamstring any attempts to institutionalize a substantial regular force.⁵ The militias used tactics largely based on those used during the Revolutionary War from Von Steuben's "Blue Book" while the standing army began to train with Colonel Alexander Smyth's tactics manual. Prior to the war, there were attempts to update the manuals in use, adapting them to the French model used effectively over the previous decade.⁶ Political fighting and military traditionalism impeded these issues as seen repeatedly with many attempts at innovation in America's martial history.⁷

The first test case during the invasion of the Niagara region of Upper Canada, modern Ontario, Canada, was the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812 fought near Queenston on the Niagara River. Described by the British artillery captain, William Holcroft, as "A very brilliant affair,"⁸ this battle was the hurried beginning of an ill-conceived, poorly planned campaign that ended as soon as it began. A political appointee with no credible martial competence led the American force. Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer received very little logistical support and his army suffered from

a constant shortage of supplies and arms. He failed to follow basic tactical sense when he landed his force at a British strongpoint and ignored or negligently failed to use existing doctrine for river crossings, failed to train his entire force adequately, and failed to create a coalition of leadership among the subordinate commanders.⁹ He faced a widely popular British commander, General Isaac Brock, who also had very limited resources and was painfully undermanned, although a professional soldier in contrast to his opponent. The Battle of Queenston Heights began as a river crossing. Similar to air mobile movements in the 20th Century, a small force would land in the midst of enemy territory and begin fighting while waiting for reinforcements from subsequent crossings. Their immediate objective was control of the heights. The American force nearly culminated early, bogged down by heavy casualties including the commander on the ground, Lieutenant Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer. A bright young Captain, John E. Wool, led the force to conduct a flank march to seize the heights. Ultimately, after several attempts, the British were able to retake the heights after the planned American reinforcements refused to cross. This first battle represented a common issue during the war as the militia began to refuse to cross into foreign territory. The battle was lost. The higher levels of command appear to have learned very little from this battle; however, younger leaders such as Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott had plenty to say about the execution of the battle. He carried his lessons into subsequent battles as he increased in rank and position. The senior leadership made decisions that reflected recognition of the failure of leadership, tactics, training, and logistics; however, there is little documentary evidence that confirms in their own words such recognition.¹⁰

The Battle of Crysler's Farm on November 11, 1813, fought near modern Cornwall, Ontario, Canada, on the St Lawrence River, is the next case study. This was the Americans' largest military operation of the war and it was as embarrassing as it was large. Two American armies attempted to move north to Montreal by way of the St. Lawrence River. It was a concert of bad luck, poor weather, strained logistics, and poor leadership. The men fought hard against a significantly smaller force, but not as a combined force, and without the full strength of arms. This battle was primarily a failure of leadership, but served also as a catalyst for the change and innovation that the Army had failed to accomplish before the war, and following the first campaign. Tactics showed some improvement, but the execution was not synchronized and ultimately resulted in defeat. This battle, while it appears to display a lack of learning on the part of the Army, in fact reflects the slow nature of innovation and change within the Army and Department of War. After the failed 1812 campaign, the Administration implemented changes to include the removal of Brigadier General Alexander Smyth's infantry tactics handbook, which they replaced with William Duane's tactics handbook. A reflection of his epically poor leadership, Major General James Wilkinson failed to ensure the universal application of the new handbook, which contributed to his inability to synchronize efforts, or conduct universal training of the force. The War Department, some of its senior commanders, and its department head, once again relied on politically appointed leaders rather than experienced, talented men of war. The aftermath of this battle and campaigning season was so horrific that popular and political pressure forced the Madison administration to overhaul its military leadership.

The third and final example is the result of two years of very slow learning. The Battle of Chippawa on July 5, 1814, fought near modern Chippawa, Ontario, Canada on the Niagara River, was a bright spot amid a series of unsuccessful campaigns and battlefield losses. It demonstrated the results of lessons learned, the potential of well-trained American fighting men, and the powerful influence of competent leadership. Major General Jacob Brown's Left Division crossed the Niagara River, seized Fort Erie, and marched north along the Niagara River in order to seize control of the waterway between Lakes Ontario and Erie in an attempt to cut off the British provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. This action supported an eventual march on Montreal. The American army engaged in that battle was "the best military formation the United States was to field during the war,"¹¹ and prevailed against an equal-sized British and Canadian force. Their tactics, from skirmishing to fixing and flanking forces, and the use of all their available assets showed marked improvement in American war fighting. While the battle did not mark a sudden shift trending from failure to success, it did show how the pieces finally began falling into place. It was the first victorious post-Revolutionary land battle against a traditional European-style force for the U.S. Army and it returned a sense of pride to the organization. Although the campaign of 1814 ended, once again, in failure to seize Canada, it did help to set the stage for better peace negotiations with the British. Following the battle, the leaders at Chippawa became national heroes. The leaders identified and carried forward the factors of success into the remaining 18th Century foundations of a professional force forged in Mexico City and Gettysburg. Many of the leaders in the Battle of Chippawa went on to be senior leaders of the Army as it continued to innovate and professionalize after 1815.

This thesis concludes with a comprehensive analysis of the battles as leaders, experience, and progress interconnected them. It will wrap up answers to the questions: How did the US Army train and fight at the beginning, middle, and end of the war in terms of preparation, employment, and execution in combat? What tactics and training were in use in each of the studied battles? What changes occurred, between battles, and were they institutional or leader driven? Did doctrine follow or lead these changes? What improvements if any, did leaders make? It shows that the U.S. Army and the War Department at all levels identified shortcomings in their efforts to raise, train, equip, and fight. They made adjustments, albeit rather slowly and ineffectively. Probably the most important change made was the selection process of the Army's leadership.

¹ Richard V. Barbuto, *Niagara 1814, America Invades Canada* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas 2000), 1-11.

² Donald E. Graves, *Field of Glory The Battle of Crysler's Farm, 1813* (Toronto, Canada: Robin Brass Studio, 1999), 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ William J. Bennett, *America The Last Best Hope, Volume I: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War* (New York: Nelson Current, 2006), 199.

⁵ Edward C. Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 181* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 8-15.

⁶ Ibid., 16

⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁸ Robert Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair, The Battle of Queenston Heights, 1812* (Toronto, Canada: Robin Brass Studio, 2003), 199.

⁹ Ibid., 209.

¹⁰ Ibid., 204-207.

¹¹ Robert E. Graves, *Redcoats and Grey Jackets: The Battle of Chippawa 5 July 1814* (Toronto, Canada: Dundurn Press, 1994), 28.

CHAPTER 2

THE BATTLE OF QUEENSTON HEIGHTS

The invasion of Canada by the United States began in confusion. Major General Henry Dearborn was unclear as to what force he was responsible to lead. Major General William Hull attacked from Fort Detroit under the impression that he was part of a multi-pronged assault and Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer was still trying to figure out how to outfit, train, and prepare his forces to assault in the Niagara region. The Battle of Queenston Heights was the first stage in a campaign to seize the Niagara region and sever lines of communication, trade, and supply between western and eastern Upper Canada. Supported by attacks in the west by General Hull, the James Madison Administration expected that the small British force would capitulate, Canadian citizens would welcome annexation, and the remaining march to Quebec would be but a formality. As President Jefferson pointed out, it would be merely a matter of marching, as the superior valor of the militia supported by a small regular force could bring victory.¹ It was with this optimistic understanding that Madison's War Department called up 100,000 militia in April 1812.² The war that followed did not meet the strategic or tactical goals of the nation in 1812. General Van Rensselaer was unable to secure victory against a smaller force with his theoretically larger invasion force as the assault failed, not just in Canada, but also on the American shores of the Niagara River.

The modern offensive requires a course of action which is above all else, complete.³ The American plan was not. Van Rensselaer did not appear to appreciate the risks involved in conducting a river crossing, or mitigate them. He did not anticipate the confusion at the embarkation point, he landed his force at a British strongpoint, and

possibly the most repetitive error through history; he did not conduct rehearsals or ensure that he clearly disseminated the plan to his subordinates to ensure mutual understanding. In order to understand the failure that was the Battle of Queenston Heights, as well as the struggle that followed in 1812-1814, one must understand the conditions that created a woefully unprepared, not yet professional force. While Van Rensselaer was responsible for his command, the proverbial cards were already stacked against him.

The War of 1812 began its slow simmer with the success of the American Revolution. The British never fully considered the United States as an equal member of the international community. It took years for the Washington administration to have the British removed from their forts in America's Northwest Territories. The American settlers in the west accused the British of continuing to instigate the western Indians' violence. In 1793, during the War of the First Coalition, President Washington issued a Proclamation of Neutrality, hoping to avoid entanglement in the war between France and Great Britain because of pre-existing agreements with the pre-revolutionary French government. While the French expected the U.S. to use trade to counter British efforts to strangle the French economy, the British began confiscating American vessels and impressing her seamen into naval service. Still seeking to avoid a war he could not afford, President Washington sent John Jay to negotiate an end to the crisis. The resulting Jay Treaty (1794) normalized economic and diplomatic relations with the British. The Republicans ridiculed this Federalist supported treaty because it did not settle the issue of sovereignty as they felt it should. The French viewed the treaty as a betrayal and a series of events followed which nearly led to war with France. As the Republicans rose to power with the election of Thomas Jefferson, they began to roll back the policies of the

Federalists as peace ensued in Europe. The Republicans drastically cut the Army and the Navy. President Jefferson and his supporters believed that for our defense, only a flotilla of privateers and the militias of little ward republics would suffice.⁴ These ward republics would act as small localized democratic versions of the federal government, run similarly to ancient Greek city-states, except as part of an agrarian society. Each free man would have land allotted to him with a requirement to defend the state and the nation in time of war. In 1803, as the conflict in Europe resumed, the British policy of impressments continued. There were efforts by the Jefferson administration to use economic coercion to protect American ships and crews with the Non-Importation Act of 1806, a ban on specific imports from Great Britain, and the Embargo Act in 1807 forbidding trade with foreign ports.⁵ The British had recently enacted the Orders in Council barring neutral trade with French held ports while the French responded with the Milan Decree, which said that France could confiscate any ships obeying the orders in council.⁶ The Embargo Act resulted in more damage to the American economy than its intended target, so the administration replaced it with the Non-Intercourse Law in March 1809, which restricted trade with only Great Britain and France. While the Madison Administration continued to pit France against Great Britain, Congress finally passed Macon's Bill No. 2 in May 1810.⁷ This law opened trade with all the belligerents and allowed the U.S. to restrict trade with any belligerent that did not change their policy in the event that the other did. Thus, if Britain repealed the Orders in Council, then the U.S. would restrict trade with France. As the country approached war, many in Congress, during the early months of 1812, preferred war with France rather than Britain.⁸ It was events like the *Chesapeake*

*Affair** and alleged British support to the Indians in the West that created the needed impetus to attack British holdings in Canada.

The native tribes routinely harassed encroaching settlers since before General “Mad” Anthony Wayne defeated a large native force at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. They continued the practice well into the 1800s. In response to the growing threat of European-Americans, native tribes, led by The Prophet and his brother Tecumseh, challenged the growing American presence. At the outbreak of another Indian war in 1811, William Henry Harrison, the governor of the Indiana Territory, assembled a force of 1,000 regulars and militia to attack Prophet’s Town in response to continued threats, raids on settlers, and alleged British support. Fighting at the Battle of Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811, he was victorious, succeeding in pushing the native force back. While attacks continued on settlements, Tecumseh and many of his fighters moved east to the Detroit River area where he announced to his confederation his decision to ally with the British. These events cemented the American belief that the British were funding and arming the natives attacking settlements and disrupting the fur trade.⁹ The complaints were mounting and the pressure at home was building. President Madison had many in his own party that were against the war and he had an election on the horizon.¹⁰ While President Madison seemed to have had little choice but to convene the 12th Congress early to discuss war preparations in November 1811, he followed a Republican tradition

* The Chesapeake Affair was a short naval incident on June 22, 1807 in which the British warship, HMS Leopard engaged with the American ship USS Chesapeake, firing on, and then boarding the ship in order to search for and capture sailors accused of deserting the Royal Navy. The British captured four sailors and released the ship. This event caused uproar during President Jefferson’s second term leading to economic sanctions.

of territorial expansion, in line with a Jeffersonian idea that would create the ideal security conditions to protect their confederacy from European and Native American interference.¹¹ By March of the following year, Congress had expanded the size of the army and provided a system for funding it. President Madison presented a formal declaration of war to Congress on June 17, 1812, they approved it, and Madison signed it on June 18.¹² Declaring war, the Administration would soon find out, was the easy part. Building an army that could prosecute the war would prove to be the challenge that would limit the strategic goals of the administration.

The Americans designed their army on the 18th Century European model and was a shell of an army during the build up to the War of 1812. Ironically, as they built their case for war, the Republicans saw a large standing army as a threat to liberty and thus did not trust such a force.¹³ During the Jefferson Administration, to lower taxes and decrease government spending, The Republican Congress reduced the army to 3,300 soldiers in 1802.¹⁴ As war in Europe continued, combined with growing friction with the French and British governments, the Republicans begrudgingly found use for a larger force. Following the *Chesapeake Affair*, Congress approved an army increase to 10,000 soldiers.¹⁵ It never *reached* 10,000, but only attained 5,500 officers and enlisted going into 1811.¹⁶ Throughout its short history, the American government used legislation to appropriate forces tailored to events, rather than maintaining a standing army of any significant size. Similar to the troops approved for Anthony Wayne, or those intended to put down rebellions like Shay's, the War of 1812 required its own appropriation of force. The government would charge the militias to carry the glory of the republic while the standing army was capable enough to bring expertise and discipline to the front lines.

Unfortunately, this would not stand the test of combat. The Federalists did not trust the militias and while they feared a standing army in the hands of the Republicans, they had felt that a uniformly trained and ready militia could augment a significantly stronger force.¹⁷ Both parties argued that the other intended to use the army to seize the government. This fear was understandable as Alexander Hamilton and George Washington both felt that a strong government with a strong army was necessary to secure the nation and had ensured that good Federalists would lead the army. The Republicans likewise used the growth in 1808 to emplace Republican leaders in positions of power. Adding to the paranoia, men like Aaron Burr and James Wilkinson stood accused of attempting to build their own nation in the new western lands. Early efforts during the Washington Administration had attempted to find the answer in creating a small standing force and empowering the states to provide for their militias. The resulting Uniform Militia Act of 1792, rather than providing federal funds for arming and uniformly training states' militias, it mandated that individuals would be responsible for their own weapons and uniforms while the state enforced compliance.¹⁸ The 11th Congress, in 1811, authorized a volunteer force of not more than 50,000 troops to augment the regular army and the combined militias. In 1812, the army grew to 35,000 regulars and 50,000 volunteers on paper. The peacetime army of 10,000 was to be filled while 25,000 were raised to support the war.¹⁹ On April 10, 1812, Congress authorized 100,000 militia deployed by the several states.²⁰ This formidable army was the result of years of debate between the two parties. They debated the threat of such armies, how to fund and train them, and what composition the forces ought to be. This debate would continue throughout the war and after. The real problem in this force was how to train

them, sustain them, and what system of discipline to use. These problems in addition to weather, poor leadership, and uncertainty about the operational connection to national strategy confronted the American army in the late summer of 1812 in the Niagara region of New York.

The Niagara region had been an important trading route between the Northwest Territories and Quebec. It was a quiet scene described as beautiful on either side. Prior to the end of the Revolutionary War, businessmen such as John Stedman locally controlled the trade routes to include a portage route on the east side of the river connecting the upper falls to the lower region. Following the Americanization of the east route, the British began designs on the west to create competitive routes. Queenstown, later known as Queenston, was the site of British army barracks. Settlers followed the resident soldiers to work the trade routes on the Canadian side. Trade flourished in the region as populations grew on both sides.²¹ The Niagara served as a key line of communication between Upper and Lower Canada or modern day Ontario and Quebec. Control of this region would be critical to cutting off the under-manned British army between Montreal and Detroit. As such, Queenston was strategically valuable terrain to seize as it allowed control between the north and south.

The American strategy was to attack the weak British defenses at Detroit, Niagara, and Montreal simultaneously.²² The Madison Administration selected former Secretary of War, General Dearborn, to command the Northern Campaign. A good Republican, his credentials as a Revolutionary War veteran made him a safe bet to command the field army. In Detroit, General Hull led, and in Niagara, General Van Rensselaer, a popular Federalist politician, began to build combat power for the invasion.

The Madison Administration with the New York Governor allegedly chose Van Rensselaer hoping he would fail as they expected him to compete for the New York gubernatorial position with Republican, Daniel Tompkins in 1813. While there may have been consideration that a loss could have this effect, it is more likely that the Republicans needed a Federalist face in order to convince the largely Federalist led militias and the Federalist leaning New England states to support the war effort.²³ If Van Rensselaer were successful, it could secure his political future as well. Van Rensselaer had been a militia leader since the age of 21, although only nominally as he was the son of an extremely wealthy Dutch merchant and therefore had never actively served except in parades and during inspections.²⁴ Described as “a strictly amateur militia general,” he was unprepared to lead the invasion, and recognized it.²⁵ As a condition to take command, he requested that his second cousin, Solomon Van Rensselaer, serve as his aide at the rank of lieutenant colonel. Solomon was a slightly more experienced officer having served with “Mad Anthony” Wayne at the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. He was an aggressive man with a strong temper, but more importantly, he had experience training soldiers in short order.²⁶

On the British side, Lieutenant General Sir George Prevost led the army as the governor general of British Canada. Prevost was the son of a British officer. He was born in New Jersey during his father’s tour of duty at the British colonial post and was a professional soldier supported by an established and clear chain of command unlike his American counterparts.²⁷ He was cautious and patient, characteristics both lauded and criticized during and after the war. Prevost’s regular forces in Upper and Lower Canada were a mere 5,700 officers and men, with seasoned commanders of ample experience in

North America to lead them.²⁸ The American commanders had no such knowledge of the Niagara region, and their combat experience was outdated if they had any at all.

Recognition of this weakness and his own limited resources likely contributed to the manner in which Prevost fought the war. Major General Isaac Brock led the force responsible for the Niagara and Detroit. Unlike Prevost, Brock was much more aggressive and wanted to bring the war to the Americans rather than wait on them to attack at an unknown place or time. Brock had only 1,150 soldiers spread between Detroit and Fort George on the Niagara. He had 11,650 militia on the rolls, but did not trust their loyalty, as many in the Niagara region were formerly Americans displaced by the Revolutionary War or simply comfortable with their neighbors across the river.²⁹

Having limited resources, Brock wanted to attack while the Americans were still preparing to fight. Both the Americans and the British knew well that the American army was ill prepared to fight. Brock had the support of regionally connected native tribes, to include Tecumseh and The Prophet, but like the militia, he did not trust them, calling them a “fickle race.”³⁰ Brock was well established in Canada, and popular. Having served many years in Canada, he knew the region well. He and Prevost recognized the importance of the Niagara, as well as the likelihood of an American advance toward Montreal as had been the case in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution.³¹

As the summer of 1812 waned, Van Rensselaer assembled his force, concentrating his militia south of Lewiston, and the regulars near Youngstown and at Fort Niagara.³² Brigadier General Alexander Smyth’s Brigade remained at Black Rock near Buffalo, New York. Van Rensselaer met with his subordinate leaders and determined

they were well short of the force required to conduct an invasion, so he requested additional troops. From spring to autumn in 1812, there were 7,480 of the regulars, volunteers, and militia in the Niagara region.³³ Van Rensselaer had between 1200 and 1500 involved in the invasion. Reports vary on how many men crossed, died, and were captured. The confusion on both sides of the river resulted in a similar lack of clarity on how many men actually fought. The estimate of 1,353 consisted of 613 regulars and 740 militia. There was an additional 174 American artillerists involved. With respect to varying accounts of available troops, Van Rensselaer's estimate was 5,206 of which 2,550 were regulars.³⁴ Five cannon and one mortar supported the American landings. The British numbers were much clearer. The total number of regulars, militia, and natives involved in the battle was 1,366 represented by the 49th Foot, 41st Foot, Royal Artillery, and several militia units such as the 5th Lincoln and 2nd York. They had eight cannon, one mortar, and one howitzer in support of the infantry.³⁵

While Brock's experienced soldiers were well trained, disciplined, and ready in the months leading up to the battle, Van Rensselaer was busy trying to build a force from the ground up. He had to combine a regular force with little if any experience or training with volunteers of similar quality and a militia force that had existed nominally at best prior to the war. As if these were not challenge enough, the militia and regulars were using different manuals for drill. In 1812, Secretary of War William Eustis commissioned two books for a system of discipline for the Armies of the United States to use. The militias were still using Von Steuben's *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of The United States*, a remnant of the Revolutionary War.³⁶ At the time, Eustis and many other military and civilian thinkers had become interested in French tactics

following the battles of Jena and Austerlitz and sought to replace Von Steuben's tactical manual with one modeled after French tactics. Brigadier General Alexander Smyth, then a colonel and the Inspector General, wrote *Regulations for the Field Exercise, Manoeuvres, and Conduct of the Infantry of the United States* published just prior to the start of the war. The second was *A Hand Book for Infantry*, by Lieutenant Colonel William Duane, published in 1809. Both men had solid political connections to members of the Republican Party, but Eustis chose Smyth's regulations to be tested.³⁷ Following the tests, the Administration ordered the regular forces to use the manual, while most militias continued to retain Von Steuben's manual. Eustis argued that the militia would have to reorganize completely in order to change to the new French based system, so they would retain Von Steuben's book and the regulars would adopt Smyth's regulations. He presumed that the tactics would trickle down to the militias and they would more easily adopt it over time.³⁸ While Smyth's regulations maintained some aspects of Von Steuben's book, it largely modeled the French system. It focused on marching and movements, but did not provide the same detail in tactical actions such as crossing linear obstacles or the detailed duties of each position in the Army in the manner that Von Steuben did.³⁹ These were key aspects that would haunt the combatants of Queenston Heights. As a militiaman, Van Rensselaer would have been familiar with Von Steuben's book and less so with Smyth's regulations. It is important to note that in his decades of service in the New York Militia, one would expect that a competent officer would have read the manual of arms that his units would use. Combining two forces using two different manuals would be similar to combined operations between two countries in modern warfare. During execution, it was likely similar to assuming that subordinate

commanders would operate under standard operating procedures (SOPs), while in actuality none were in effect. This would cause disarray and failure throughout the operation from planning and preparation through execution.

A critical task that the force must accomplish in an invasion of Canada would be the river crossing. This complex event, no less challenging then as it is today, requires detailed planning and preparation. Von Steuben's "Blue Book" outlined the tasks of subordinate leaders, quartermasters, and the commandant with regard to moving the column from one site to another. Von Steuben expanded in detail the tasks required to cross a linear danger area, which leads to an enemy, defile, or other obstacle. With these tasks, the book outlines command and control of the force as each column passes.⁴⁰ Smyth's manual of drill did not clearly outline these techniques. During the summer of 1812, both sides were training vigorously in preparation for battle. Van Rensselaer's subordinate leaders quickly recognized that the regulars arrived poorly trained, mostly young, and ill disciplined. They surmised that they would be "cut up in detail."⁴¹ In his own letter to Eustis following the battle, Van Rensselaer said, "the best preparations in my power, were therefore, made to dislodge the enemy from the heights of Queenstown."⁴² He gathered boats for the mission, and began to prepare his forces. In his letter, he expressed a desire to avoid embarrassment at the river crossing, having selected the most experienced boatmen to pass the rapid river to the British side. There was at this time significant pressure from the soldiers to cease standing around and begin the attack.⁴³ The men were tired of training, sickness was a constant companion, and Brock's regulars, without a fight, had recently seized Detroit.

The recent defeat of General Hull's army at Fort Detroit by a smaller British force had given new birth to British morale and all but defeated that of the Americans near Lewistown. While the British moved men, cannon, boats, ammunition, and equipment toward Montreal, the men on the Niagara could watch as the British marched the prisoners and equipment down the Niagara. The sight had to be both disheartening and embarrassing to witness. For the leadership, this event created renewed effort to prepare for combat, as the Niagara became a much more significant battleground.⁴⁴ As preparations continued, some of the men began to clamor that Van Rensselaer was going to let the army be "hulled" in reference to recent events at Detroit.⁴⁵ Van Rensselaer hoped to retire to winter quarters to better prepare for a spring effort, as his men were not yet ready.⁴⁶ The pressure from his army and the Madison administration led to increased effort to make some gains soon. On October 8, 1812, an opportunity arose. Anchored at nearby Fort Erie were the British brigs *Detroit* and *Caledonia*. Naval Lieutenant Jesse Elliot, with the approval of Brigadier General Smyth, planned a raid joined by some of Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott's artillerists to seize the ships and add them to a growing naval force.⁴⁷ A small victory here would build the morale of the men and drive success as the campaign drifted toward winter. Elliot and Scott's force set out after dark on a wet night and seized both ships. The strong current brought them across British guns and in the morning members of the 49th Foot attempted to recapture the *Detroit* before Scott's guns drove them back. The skirmish ended with the burning of the *Detroit* and the successful seizure of the *Caledonia*.⁴⁸ Both sides suffered casualties, but the Americans were jubilant at what Van Rensselaer referred to as a partial success.⁴⁹ His army, excited to fight, allegedly passed to Van Rensselaer the demand to fight or they would go home.

It was under this pressure that he chose to attack on October 11. He then changed his plan to seize Fort George after scouts informed him that the British had a poorly defended garrison at Queenston Heights, prompting him to instead strike there.⁵⁰ Should he succeed in seizing the heights, he would have met his goal to winter by quartering in Queenston in preparation for the following spring campaign.⁵¹ Van Rensselaer began detailed planning for the invasion assembling boats and ordering General Smyth's brigade to march to Lewiston to join the assault. Lieutenant Colonel John Chrystie's 13th Infantry with 400 men marched to Lewiston, although delayed due to communication issues. The evening of the 10th, a militia lieutenant, John Simms, was chosen to bring up the boats while Solomon Van Rensselaer assembled the troops. The story recounted later stated that the strong current forced Simms downstream where he landed and disappeared with the majority of the oars for the remaining boats. Annoyed, General Van Rensselaer cancelled the mission and he sent a note to that effect to Smyth whose column was then marching toward Lewiston. This resulted in Smyth and his brigade returning to Black Rock. It was not until after the battle that he received orders to once again march to join the battle. His brigade of regulars would sit out this fight.

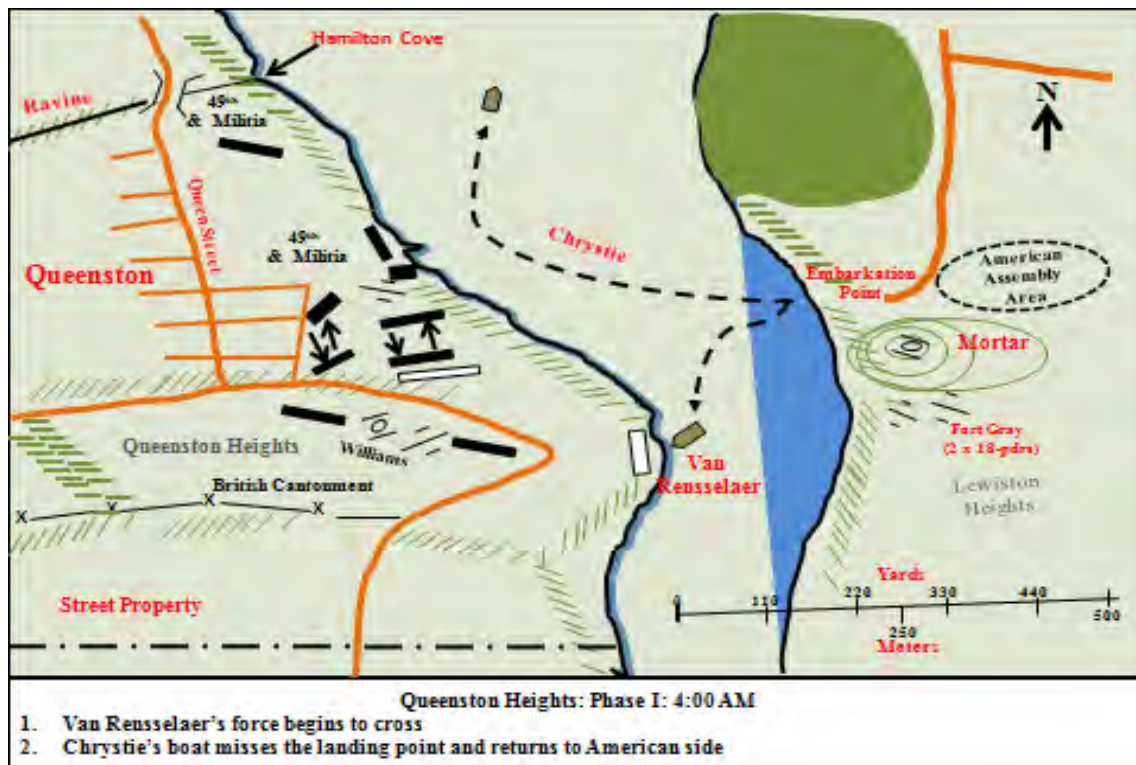


Figure 1. Phase I: Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

Just before 4 a.m. on the morning of October 13, 1812, the American force prepared to embark on the river crossing in three waves to invade Canada at Queenston. The first wave consisted of 40 artilleryists, 150 militiamen, 150 regulars from the 13th Regiment under Chrystie with Lieutenant Colonel Van Rensselaer in command. Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick commanded the second wave with the remainder of the 13th. The third wave would carry the remaining militiamen over the river under Major James Mullany.⁵² The embarkation point was an old portage point just south of Lewiston not far from the American camp, but it was within range of British artillery. It was part of a ravine, and thus availed the troops little maneuver space. The American leadership had

not identified an officer to control the embarkation point or selected a marshalling area to posture troops for embarkation. As such, there was no control over the sequence of embarkation. Chrystie's regiment marched down to the boats and began to load. Solomon Van Rensselaer, instead of attempting to clear the situation and draw British attention, allowed them to load and left the militiamen to join the second wave in place of the second portion of the 13th. Solomon Van Rensselaer instructed Major John Morrison to lead them across the river. By 4 a.m., thirteen boats with about 300 men began to cross into Canada.

The weather was cold and windy; it had stormed all week prior to the assault, and the river was difficult to navigate with whirlpools, changing currents, and awkward boats full of soldiers, equipment, and artillery pieces. General Van Rensselaer had ensured during planning that they selected only experienced boatman for the crossing.⁵³ It would otherwise have been impossible to find the correct landing.⁵⁴ His selected landing spot was 500 yards upstream of Queenston, just past a bend in the river where the British could not see from the town during daylight hours. It was, however, in range of artillery and small arms fire from the town and the Redan battery on the heights. Once on land the troops would climb up a forty-foot bank of muddy, gravel covered land where British artillery and rifles would greet them.

As the first boats neared shore, sentries identified them and opened fire. Lieutenant John Valleau was killed and several others wounded as the guard station fired, then quickly spread the alarm to the town's garrison force of 420.⁵⁵ As he waited for Lieutenant Colonel Van Rensselaer to land, Captain John Wool, the senior American officer, took command and formed the nearly 220 men into ranks to march on Queenston.

As Van Rensselaer landed, he ordered Wool to march. There was a short pause in artillery fire from the heights as well as from Queenston proper. General Van Rensselaer directed counter fire from Fort Gray on Lewiston Heights to cover the landing. Neither side had an advantage in the dark as they fired blindly into the night. Before Wool's men could advance up the heights behind the battery posted there, they received effective fire from Captain James Dennis' men coming from town. Wool quickly executed a facing movement to return fire forcing the British back, although this maneuver was successful, both Solomon Van Rensselaer and Wool received wounds.

Van Rensselaer ordered the troops back down to the beach where they waited for Chrystie who had not yet arrived. While there was some discussion following the battle as to the causes for the setback, ranging from a scared boatman, cowardice on Chrystie's part, and uncontrollable river currents, it was a fact that Chrystie's boat did not make the landing, and returned to the American bank. When he arrived on shore, he encountered confusion. Since there had been nobody in authority at the embarkation point, soldiers were using whatever boat they could to join the fight. It was chaos. In short order, British artillery spotted the loading point and rained shells on the ravine creating more havoc. There would be no clear second or third wave, so much as random boatloads of men joining the fray. As British shell tore up Lieutenant Colonel Fenwick's men at the ravine, the battery at Fort Gray countered with effective fire disrupting the British guns and infantry.

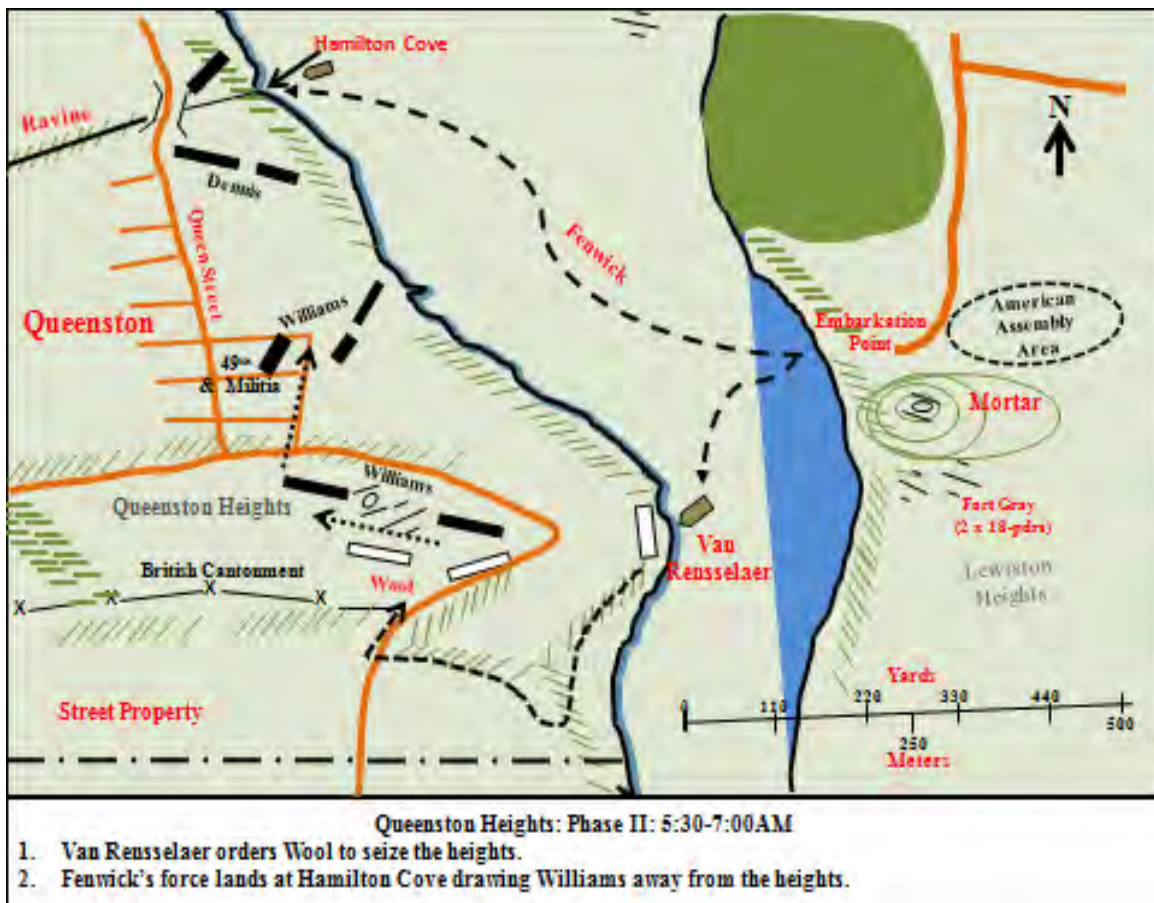


Figure 2. Phase II Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

Meanwhile at the landing point, Captain Wool requested guidance. In his wounded condition, Van Rensselaer determined that to be successful, they must take the heights overlooking Queenston. After some time, Van Rensselaer ordered Wool to form the men of about 160, and storm the heights. Van Rensselaer would not accompany the attack due to his several wounds. Instead, he required evacuation. A returning boat evacuated the seriously wounded Van Rensselaer to the New York shore. Following a guide, Wool led his men around to the rear of the battery upon the heights. Van

Rensselaer's Aide, Major Stephen Lush, followed with orders to shoot the first man to consider breaking ranks. As the movement began, Fort Gray had silenced the British guns in town allowing Fenwick's men to load their boats and cross the river. It is not clear if he chose his path or if the current swept his boats as it had Chrystie's, but they landed to the north of the village at Hamilton's Cove. Regardless of the intent, it constituted a flank attack, putting the British to a fierce fight, and led Dennis to order Captain John Williams to bring his infantry from the heights to reinforce the village. Fenwick received several wounds and most of the men were captured or killed while a few escaped. Wool's men continued to move to the Redan on the heights, climbing unnoticed behind the battery. The lead infantrymen set up a screen as they reached the top to provide security for the rest of the unit as they formed ranks, just as Von Steuben's book prescribed.⁵⁶ Upon seeing the Americans behind them, the British fled their position toward Queenston.

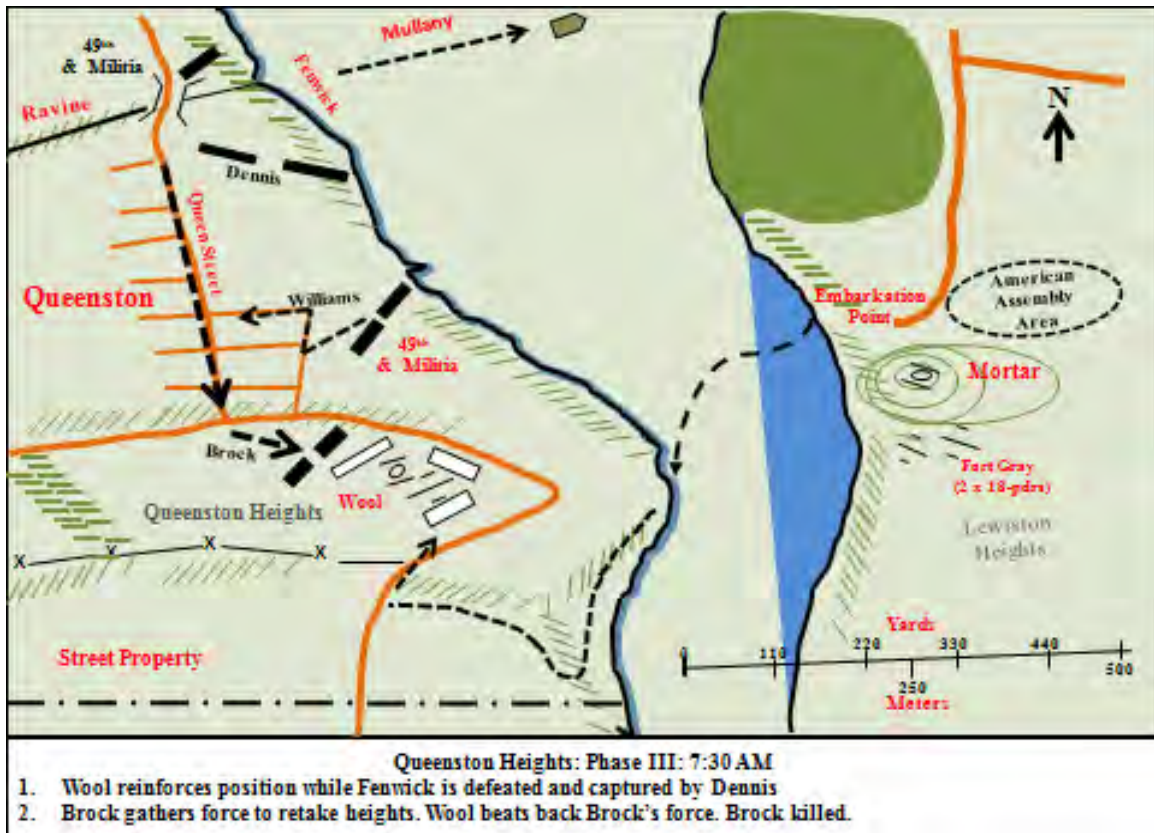


Figure 3. Phase III Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

General Brock quickly recognized the error in bringing Williams' infantry down from the heights, gathered his available men, and attempted to retake the battery without first identifying the size of the force he faced. It was during this counterattack that he received a mortal wound to the chest. The man who had embarrassed Hull at Detroit lay dying as the Americans held the heights. American troops continued to reinforce Wool as boats made their way across.

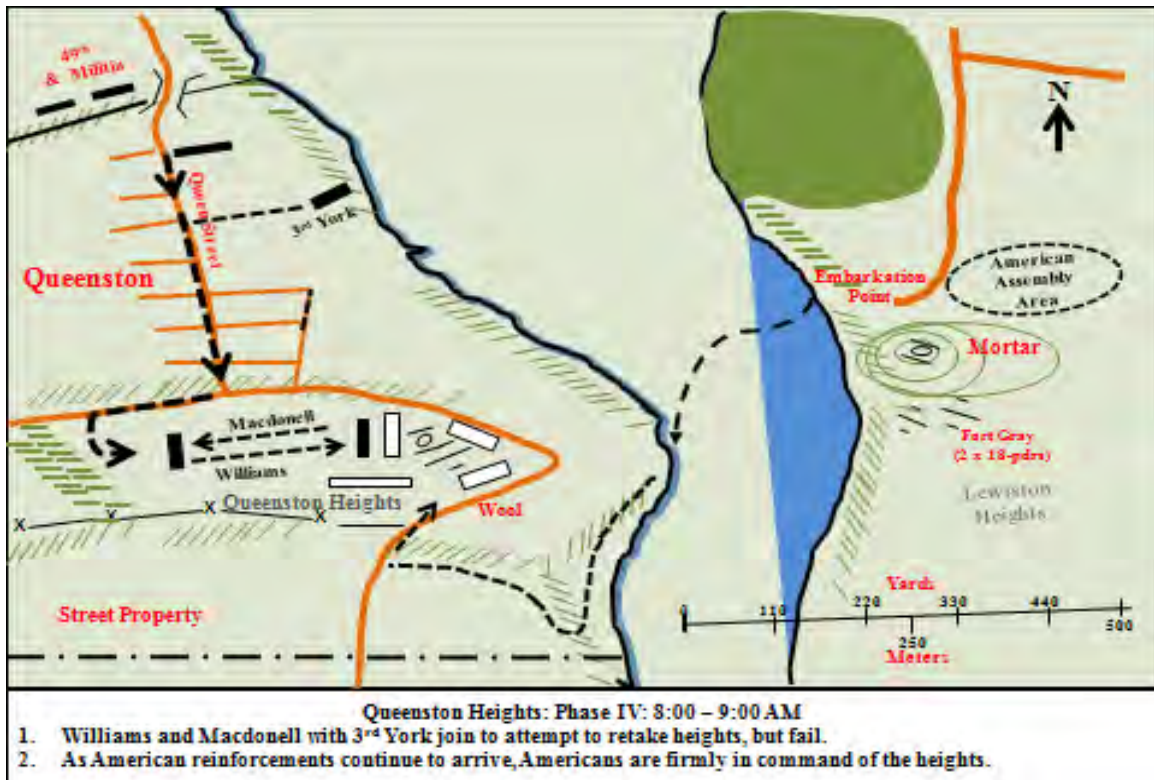


Figure 4. Phase IV Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

Captain Williams attempted to retake the heights again with an ad hoc force of 70 men. Rather than a frontal assault, as Brock had attempted, Williams approached from a flank, but Wool's force was too strong for him and he forced the British to withdraw once again, wounding Williams and capturing over 20 British.⁵⁷ By 9 a.m., the town of Queenston was all but deserted with the British had gathering north of town, preparing to counterattack. The Americans felt the wave of victory as they began to reinforce their position on the heights and build combat power. The river crossing was safe and more soldiers crossed over.

While the Americans strengthened their position, Major General Roger Sheafe was already dispatching troops to reinforce Queenston. By 6:30 a.m., he had sent three detachments of men and artillery. The third detachment consisted of 160 warriors of the Grand River Six Nations, a loose confederacy of British aligned native tribes, led by John Norton.⁵⁸ As Fort George and the nearby town of Newark emptied, American guns at Fort Niagara began to fire on the fort and town, starting several fires and occupying the militia there. Shortly after receiving news of Brock's death, Sheafe departed for Queenston followed thereafter by 140 regulars and 130 militia.⁵⁹ By 10 a.m., the Americans had seized the heights, seized the town, and had but to hold it against counterattack. This proved easier said than done. The recurring problem with a shortage of available boats, management at the embarkation point, and finally the unwillingness of most of the 3,000 available militia to cross, prevented effective reinforcement of the troops in Queenston. Of that 3,000, over 700 crossed, but many, while waiting for their boats to arrive, had decided or "remembered" that they had no legal requirement to cross. They were witness to the early devastation at the embarkation, dozens of wounded and dying returning, and the obliteration of Fenwick's detachment. As Chrystie eventually crossed and took command of the force on the heights, he began to reorganize the force establishing a defensive line to the south with the main force situated facing north toward Queenston. The Americans captured an errant messenger, and it was clear that a counterattack was imminent. Chrystie did not wish to lose the hill the same way they had gained it. Therefore, he deployed a screening force to provide early warning to the force on the Redan. Militia Brigadier General William Wadsworth eventually joined the force and took command from Chrystie. He had hoped that by crossing, it would motivate the

New York Militia to cross as well. He expressed his concerns to Chrystie, sending him back to find General Van Rensselaer to inform him of the issue. Van Rensselaer informed him that he had sent an engineer to fortify the position and sent Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott across to take command at Queenston. Unfortunately, the logistics problem that resulted in too few boats had also resulted in a lack of entrenching tools to help fortify the heights. At about 11 a.m., while Van Rensselaer gave orders to his staff, fighting erupted on the heights with the sound of native war cries. Chrystie and Van Rensselaer moved to the embarkation point to cross the river where they attempted to convince the men there to cross. After failing to convince them, likely due to the overwhelming fear the presence of natives caused the men, they mounted a boat and began to cross. Shortly prior to the engagement with the natives, British guns arrived on the edge of town and began to fire upon the American guns just south of Lewiston. They were able to silence the guns three times according to Captain William Holcroft.⁶⁰ While so doing, the 41st Foot under Captain William Derenzy began to clear Queenston of Americans. It took less than an hour.⁶¹ The Americans were unable to counter the British because the natives had begun their ascent to the heights and had drawn the Americans' attention. As their attack began, the British had effectively surrounded the Americans on the heights.

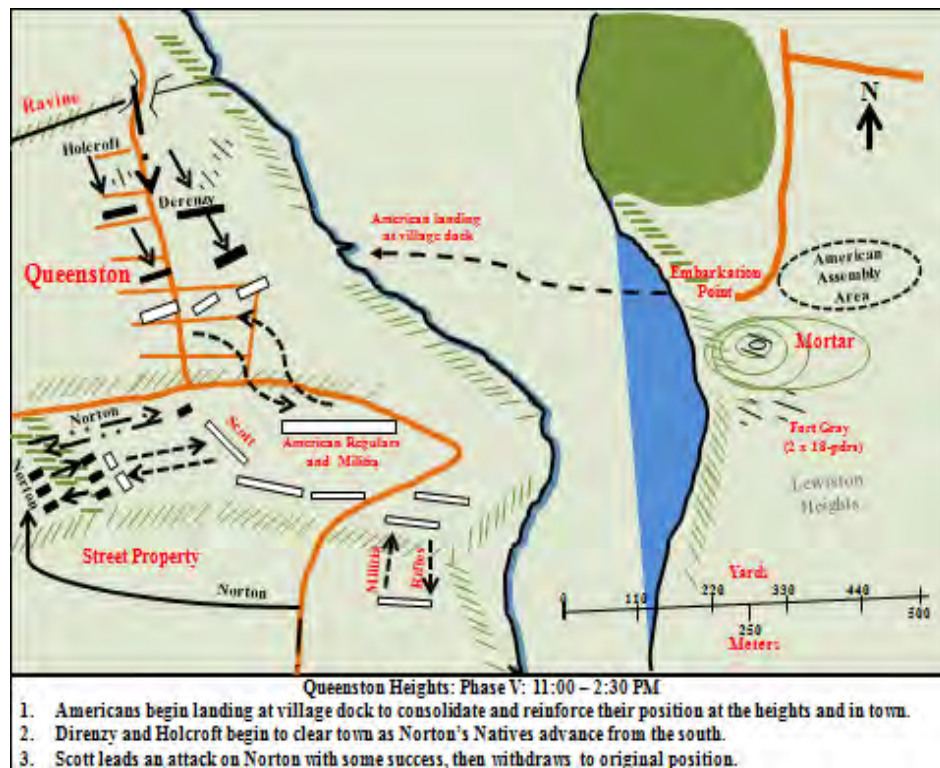


Figure 5. Phase V Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

John Norton's natives, now a force of 60 warriors, first engaged the screening infantry with hit and run tactics, using the trees for cover as they advanced up the hill. The Americans sent additional infantrymen to support the withdrawal of the screening force before taking cover themselves. Norton's men continued to probe the American line before advancing during a barrage of British artillery against the American right flank. Winfield Scott was at this time in command and executed what would become a common tactic for him. While the flank force fixed Norton's men with effective fire, he wheeled another element around to fire on the natives' flank. The combined force then began to push Norton's men back. They were unable to continue the fight, so Norton broke contact

with the remaining 20 men to reorganize. At the same time, Scott executed a well-organized withdrawal back to American lines, as he could not compete with the irregular tactics of the natives. Following this skirmish, Van Rensselaer, having arrived with Chrystie, held a council of war with his officers. Chrystie was the only officer to recommend a retreat at this time, as there were not enough soldiers to defend against a British counterattack. Many soldiers had been sneaking off the line and moving back across the river. Van Rensselaer decided to cross back as well to attempt to persuade further reinforcements to cross along with ammunition and supplies. As he loaded his boat, soldiers seeking to cross over as well swarmed around their commanding general. When he arrived, Van Rensselaer tried without success to rally militia to cross. It did not take him long to realize that he would have no further volunteers.⁶² Van Rensselaer reported to Eustis in his official report that he sent ammunition and a note to Wadsworth that should he desire to effect a retreat, he would supply cover fire and as many boats as he could.⁶³

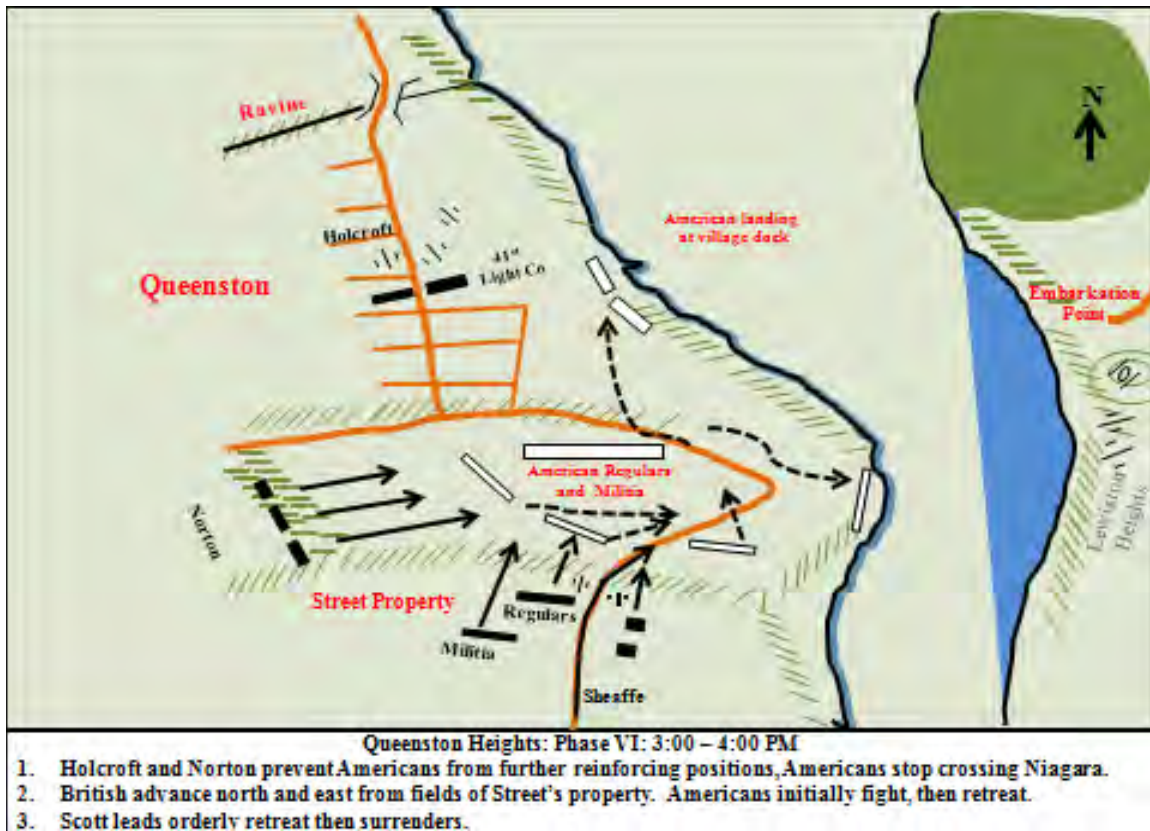


Figure 6. Phase VI Queenston Heights

Source: Created by author.

As General Sheafe arrived with his regulars and militia from Fort George, he assessed the situation fully. He ensured that he had enough men prior to marching on the heights, unlike his late predecessor, Brock. At about 1 p.m., Sheafe led his column of 650 men along the portage road to attack the heights from the south as Wool and Norton had done earlier in the day. When he arrived at his point of attack, Sheafe halted to wait for expected reinforcements. As he began to move his men into line, he appeared to have become confused and conducted multiple countermarches. While his disciplined, well-trained men were likely thoroughly embarrassed, the American accounts suggest that he

was assessing their position and picking the best place to attack.⁶⁴ While the British line worked to reestablish order, the American leaders had another council of war. The Americans had between 250–500 regulars and militia on the heights.⁶⁵ They maintained two positions, one facing north to the village, and the other facing south and west to cover the rear access. The council discussed whether it would be prudent to retreat. After much debate, they determined that it was too late for an organized retreat and they chose to stay and fight. Just after 3 p.m., the British began their advance up the hill. As they closed within 100 yards of their enemy, the American leaders decided to retreat.⁶⁶ The rear force would cover the main force facing the village as they moved down to the beachhead. The British light infantry led while Norton's warriors skirmished along the wood line. Some of the Americans lost their nerve during the retreat and ran, but for the most part, the American officers executed what Chrystie called an "orderly retreat."⁶⁷ As the British continued to advance, Norton's warriors broke through and began to take scalps, including some from Canadian militiamen mistaken for the enemy.⁶⁸ This caused further distress among the Americans.

At the landing point, those who made it were disappointed to find not one boat remained. They attempted to fight off the British, but soon had to retire and face captivity. It was better to fall into the hands of the British rather than the natives. Meanwhile on the heights, Scott continued to fight. Having seen the natives scalping their friends, some Americans jumped off the cliffs to their deaths.⁶⁹ With their retreat soon cut off, and no place to run, the Americans decided to capitulate. Scott attempted to surrender three times, but continued to receive musket fire. Brigadier General Wadsworth was finally successful in surrendering to General Sheafe. The remainder of the evening

from around 4 p.m., Queenston was busy with British soldiers gathering up the wounded, dead, and prisoners. The British escorted the prisoners to Fort George.

The following day, October 14, the British busied themselves collecting and burying the dead. They treated the wounded in makeshift hospitals. Major General Van Rensselaer sent surgeons to assist. It is unknown the exact number dead and wounded; however, Van Rensselaer reported 60 dead and 170 wounded.⁷⁰ Other accounts say 200 killed and 400 wounded.⁷¹ Estimates range, however, from 160 to 500 killed and wounded.⁷² The British casualties were much lower, only 20 killed. The British count of prisoners was 436 regulars and 489 militia. Sheafe allowed the militiamen to return to the American side along with Brigadier General Wadsworth on their word not to fight again. The Battle of Queenston Heights, the American baptism of fire would haunt its participants the rest of their lives. Chrystie, Solomon Van Rensselaer, and Smyth would all recount in the papers and letters to Eustis and anyone that would listen to their version of events. Accusations flew, and the recipient gave rebuttal.

“The events of the 13th October exhibit a strange assemblage of military folly, daring intrepidity, palpable blunders and unavailing courage.”⁷³ The battle exhibited a long list of failures that ultimately reflect on the leaders planning the fight. Logistics, poor leadership, and bad tactical planning were most at fault, as young leaders such as Winfield Scott may have overcome many other deficiencies by their courage, leadership, and skill. There was a marked difference in the effect that the loss of Brock had on the British as compared to the loss of Lieutenant Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer for the Americans. For all his worth to his cousin, Solomon did not catch the negligence in logistical planning or the correct tactical employment of troops crossing a river obstacle.

The senior leaders engaged did not appear to recognize the proximate causes of failure. General Van Rensselaer even refers to it as a “victory . . . really won; but lost for the want of a small reinforcement.”⁷⁴ In his letter to Secretary of War Eustis, he was amazed at the “unpardonable neglect” of the militia who had failed to reinforce their brothers on the heights.⁷⁵ As noted, he spent much energy on ensuring the availability of boats and oarsmen. In his *Notices of The War of 1812*, John Armstrong pointed out the failure to provide adequate boats to support equipment and men crossing expeditiously, was a key factor in the loss at Queenston.⁷⁶ His assessment of Van Rensselaer’s “deficient knowledge” appears at a glance to be accurate.⁷⁷ Van Rensselaer’s ignorance contradicts the very book of tactics he ought to have studied as an officer in the militia of New York. Von Steuben’s first comments on the role of the commander says, “The State having entrusted him with the care of a regiment, his greatest ambition should be to have it at all times and in every respect as complete as possible . . . honesty, sobriety, and a remarkable attention to every point of duty.”⁷⁸ This translates to today’s statement that the commander is responsible for everything his unit does or fails to do. Van Rensselaer failed to use the tactical doctrine available to him, failed to plan appropriate logistics, and failed in basic leadership to provide his forces with control throughout the fight.

Logistical issues plagued the American armies throughout the War of 1812. Initially, the system reflected the process during the Revolutionary War. Eustis used an antiquated system. William Eustis and the Madison Administration developed a system of procurement and delivery between the Commissary General of Purchasing and the Quartermaster General. The system conceptually was not very different from what the Continental Army used during the American Revolution.⁷⁹ In New York, Militia

Brigadier General Peter B. Porter, a Republican was the Quartermaster General responsible for outfitting General Van Rensselaer's army. Van Rensselaer, a Federalist, believed that Porter was deliberately delaying the requisition of supplies. Due to their political rivalry, it is possible that Porter did not put forth his best effort.⁸⁰ The reality of the time was that there was no supporting road structure, infrastructure such as a system of accessible depots, or a good system of organization for General Porter to utilize. It is likely that the ineffective system provided a good cover for Porter who likely had no desire to assist a New York Federalist in gaining glory.

In planning a river crossing, the leader must treat it as an obstacle. In the case of the Niagara, it was an obstacle observed by the enemy and thus a final terrain feature prior to contact with the enemy. Smyth's manual did not deal with the movement of a column by an obstacle, or how one should transition from camp to camp. This could have provided Van Rensselaer with an excuse for his ignorance; however, as a militia officer with significant time in service, he would have been familiar with Von Steuben's manual that specifically outlined actions for controlling the movement of troops. Specifically, it assigns tasks to the quartermaster, NCO's, and officers to control transition points. It outlines how to cross linear obstacles leading to an enemy. Finally, it discusses control of the columns at the halt.⁸¹ Van Rensselaer either ignored all of these aspects in training and preparation for the assault or negligently failed to study warfare and prepare to lead. His army had little if any experience recognizing what right looks like and General Van Rensselaer was overwhelmed with the task of outfitting and equipping his army. The task of training largely fell on his aide, Solomon Van Rensselaer, one of few leaders with any experience. During the assault on the heights, the infantry performed basic tasks of

screening and forming ranks during the assault with ease. It is clear by their actions that their training over the summer was thorough on the tasks known. All of these tasks were available in the new manual from Smyth. A lack of imagination on General Van Rensselaer's part added to the likelihood of failure when he failed to identify the points of friction in attacking across the river or more likely chose poorly in spite of his reconnaissance with his engineers. Adding to the situation was his distaste for Brigadier General Smyth, a Republican and regular, who had advised a landing near Black Rock where he settled his force.⁸² The choice of embarkation further added to his failure as it canalized his men within observation and fields of fire for British artillery. This selection alone may have doomed him as the confusion and death would frighten the sturdiest of men as they saw their fellow soldiers dying before they even started. In modern airmobile tactics, one must deploy the largest force possible with multiple planned landing zones in the early waves in order to grant success to the aggressor. While Van Rensselaer was wise to emplace artillery to cover his deployment, it was unable to protect the men entering the boats. The available boats with skilled oarsmen were the next fault in the operation that is maddening to say the least. Identified by Armstrong as well, there were too few to support the operation during embarkation as well as in reinforcing success.⁸³ They used only 13 boats for the operation. Some the British sunk, others became useless when oarsmen fled in fear. Armstrong notes that "an army crossing a river in small detachments and consecutively, exposes itself to be beaten in detail, by an enemy much inferior to itself."⁸⁴ He also notes the lack of a demonstration to distract the enemy's attention.⁸⁵

Although ineffective, Van Rensselaer may have intended the artillery fire on Fort George to have this affect. The disorganization at embarkation, and underwhelming invasion force led to a poorly selected landing point. Robert Malcomson suggests that Brock may have had some concern that a larger force had landed further south through the night to scale the heights, a tactical concept that would have made sense.⁸⁶ Had Van Rensselaer sent larger waves of men at multiple landing points, they could have overwhelmed the force at Queenston and inspired the militiamen to cross to victory. He could have combined this force with a demonstration at Fort George and crushed the British on the Niagara. Poor leadership, tactics, and logistical planning caused the attack to fail from the start. The leaders spent the following months telling their story in order to preserve their reputation. Stephen Van Rensselaer resigned and returned home, Smyth commanded another failed invasion to end the campaign season. Armstrong recognized Smyth for wisely choosing not to prosecute his later invasion, as he did not have the requisite 3,000 dependable troops to cross the river.⁸⁷ This hesitation on the part of Smyth and the administration to cross with any less than 3,000 reflected recognition of the defeat at Queenston. There was no need to remove leaders as they self-selected. There had been only one battle with which to judge tactics. The failure in tactical prowess reflected poor leadership more so than some form of doctrine or discipline. Changes would come, but not until well after the campaign ended and the U.S. Army began preparations for the spring invasion that would birth the Battle of Crysler's Farm.

¹ James Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock The War of 1812* (Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Press, 2012), 129.

² Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 58.

³ Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 4-8.

⁴ Richard K. Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 80-81.

⁵ J. C. A. Stagg, *War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent*, ed. Donald Critchlow, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 16.

⁶ Robert Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair: The Battle of Queenston Heights, 1812* (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 2003), 19.

⁷ Stagg, *War of 1812*, 36.

⁸ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 19.

⁹ Jennifer Crump, *Canada on Fire: The War of 1812: Canadians at War* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2011), 79; Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 20.

¹⁰ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 20.

¹¹ Laxer, *Tecumseh and Brock*, 129.

¹² Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 31.

¹³ William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 6.

¹⁴ Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Bicentennial Edition (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 21.

¹⁷ C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 4-5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 21.

²⁰ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 20-21.

²¹ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 10-13.

²² Ibid., 28-30.

- ²³ Ibid., 62-71.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 62.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 68.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 32.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 36-37.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 37.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid., 81.
- ³³ Ibid., 247.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 255-9.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 262, 272, 274.
- ³⁶ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 16.
- ³⁷ Michael A. Bonura, "French Thought and the American Military Mind: A History of French Influence on the American Way of War from 1814 through 1941" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2008), 41-42, accessed January 24, 2015, <http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/etd/3548/>.
- ³⁸ Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers*, 16.
- ³⁹ Baron Von Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of The United States* (Lancaster: Printed by Francis Bailey, 1802), 65-77.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 34-37.
- ⁴¹ Van Rensselaer, Fenwick to Stephen Van Rensselaer, 8 and 10 September 1812, *The Affair of Queenstown*, 46, 47, quoted in Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 103.
- ⁴² William James, *A Full and Correct Account of the Military Occurrences of The Late War Between Great Britain and the United States of America; with an Appendix and Plates, Vol I* (London, UK: Printed for the author, 1818), 183.

- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 88.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 114.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 114-115.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 114-116.
- ⁴⁹ James, *A Full and Correct Account*, 182.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 118.
- ⁵² Ibid., 132.
- ⁵³ James, *A Full and Correct Account*, 185.
- ⁵⁴ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 133.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 135.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 151. Malcomson describes the movement while page 37 in Von Steuben's Blue Book describes the proper way to conduct a crossing of an obstacle. The two appear to match appropriately.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 156.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 160.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 163.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 169.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 170.
- ⁶² Ibid., 178.
- ⁶³ James, *A Full and Correct Account*, 188-9.
- ⁶⁴ John Armstrong, *Notices of The War of 1812 Vol I* (New-York: George Dearborn Publisher 1836), 106.
- ⁶⁵ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 183.

- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 187.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 189.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 192.
- ⁷¹ James, *A Full and Correct Account*, 199.
- ⁷² Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 193.
- ⁷³ James, *A Full and Correct Account*, 181.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 188.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Armstrong, *Notices*, 117.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ Von Steuben, *Regulations*, 65.
- ⁷⁹ Steve R. Waddell, *United States Army Logistics from the American Revolution to 9/11* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 34-35.
- ⁸⁰ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 107-110, 130-131.
- ⁸¹ Von Steuben, *Regulations*, 34-37.
- ⁸² Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 110-111.
- ⁸³ Armstrong, *Notices*, 103.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 119.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ Malcomson, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, 152.
- ⁸⁷ Smyth's Letter to Dearborn of October 30, 1812, as quoted in Armstrong, *Notices*, 107-108.

CHAPTER 3

BATTLE OF CRYSLER'S FARM

The American war machine emerged from the campaign season of 1812 embarrassed and seeking redemption. Having experienced the loss of an army at Detroit without a fight and another at Queenston Heights, Secretary of War William Eustis, and the Madison Administration were desperate for some easy wins. Madison closed the 1812 campaign season by removing the incompetent Secretary Eustis in December, and replaced him with Secretary of State James Monroe until February when he selected former general, John Armstrong. The army on paper was still unfilled, logistics were not yet improved, and money was quickly running out. Initially, Major General Henry Dearborn remained in command of the Northern Army, although suffering from various maladies. The campaign of 1812 had some positive results such as the removal of some of the incompetent leaders in William Eustis, Alexander Smyth, and Stephen Van Rensselaer. The U.S. Navy (not even a shell of its future self) performed admirably in several small skirmishes on the lakes. Finally, with the appointment of Secretary Armstrong, the War Department replaced Smyth's manual for infantry with William Duane's manual. This change had potential for positive results in creating a uniform manual for both militia and regulars, but as the army would do so many times over the next two hundred years, it did not easily accept this adjustment. The army entered the campaign season of 1813 on a restrained budget, with new leaders, and hopeful for success.

The Battle of Crysler's Farm on November 11, 1813 was but a rear guard action that may well have been written off as an effective action to end British harassment of

Major General Wilkinson's column. Instead, it ended another failed campaign season and highlighted the ineptitude of the politically selected leaders of the Army and the War Department, training and discipline of the troops, and, to a lesser extent, remaining weaknesses in the logistical capabilities of the U.S. Army. The season had begun with victories at York, the capital of Upper Canada, and Fort George at the cost of one of the war's excellent leaders in Zebulon Pike. Between May and July, the height of the fighting season, the Madison Administration then replaced the ailing Dearborn first with Brigadier General John Boyd in Niagara and then with Major General James Wilkinson and Major General Wade Hampton. Wilkinson would be the lead general in the north and Hampton would lead the army in the Lake Champlain area. Wilkinson, a Revolutionary War relic, was a shady character who was on the Spanish payroll as a spy in Louisiana. He had also conspired with Aaron Burr, although not convicted, to seize part of the Louisiana Purchase to create a separate country.¹ Hampton, also a relic of the Revolutionary war, and a newly commissioned colonel in 1808, was a political appointee who had been a successful politician and landowner in South Carolina. He was shrewd, vain, and arrogant. The two generals despised each other. Following Wilkinson's acquittal in 1811, Hampton was very angry about the outcome. Hampton refused to command subordinate to Wilkinson except should their forces combine, and agreed only to serve one campaign season.²

Following Brigadier General Alexander Smyth's failure in November the previous year, accusations of cowardice were published in the papers and retracted, but the damage was done. With Smyth's removal, the War Department also replaced his tactics manual.³ Upon John Armstrong's ascendancy to the office of the War Department,

he identified the shortcomings in training and discipline, troop strength and recruitment, logistics, and budgeting. As a former minister to France, Armstrong had become a proponent of the French system of tactics. As a result, he chose Lieutenant Colonel William Duane's *Hand Book for Infantry* for the instruction of discipline and tactics as it was already in print and used by the militias. Duane's book was a condensed version of the French manual; however, he adapted it to American conditions and ways of fighting by removing unnecessary movements. The resulting manual was too French for the Federalists and not French enough for the Republicans, thus creating dissent in its use.⁴ The militia of New York quickly accepted the manual as it was simple to understand and much more comprehensive than Smyth's manual had been. Regular Army generals tended to prefer Von Steuben, as many of them were Revolution era leaders and refused to adapt to change and innovation. The underlying problem for the Army was the constant change in tactics and discipline from year to year. Entering 1813, the Army still had no uniform doctrine of training and discipline, or the time to perfect it prior to engaging in combat.

Troop strength was another serious issue. The paper army of 35,000; approved entering the war, was only at 18,495 men on the rolls.⁵ The Administration raised soldiers pay and offered land in return for service, but it failed to have the effect desired. Monroe had received approval to increase the force to 57,351; however, by the end of 1813 the rolls only counted 34,325 men.⁶ The war was unpopular, especially in the Federalist leaning northeast states where much of the population dwelt. Budgetary concerns left conditions of servitude very poor as well. Many young men did not choose

to enter the army where one is much like a slave. Such conditions were not conducive to a republican life. Soldiering was not a respectable way to live.

The government had been thus far unsuccessful at borrowing enough money to fund the war. The Republicans would not use the national bank to incur debt and chose not to pay with tax increases to avoid political backlash for an already unpopular war. Private donors raised over \$16 Million of which the government allocated \$13 million to the War Department. Major General Dearborn had to manage the campaign in the north with limited funding.⁷ With this limited funding, Armstrong's department worked hard to improve the logistical issues pertaining to food, equipment, and arms. Even so, he was still unable to ensure the troops were clothed and fed, especially late in the season when the weather worsened.⁸ With issues in every aspect of warfare facing him, Armstrong very quickly drew up a plan of action that he wrote to Dearborn two weeks into the job in February 1813.

Secretary Armstrong, a professed student of Jomini, believed that massing forces on a key objective was the way to achieve a quick and decisive victory. He had previously advised Eustis that seizure of Montreal would result in the collapse of Canada and avail it to the conqueror. As he took office, he realized that the American force was not strong enough nor competent to move directly on Montreal. He settled on a plan to seize Kingston, followed by York and Forts George and Erie.⁹ After reducing the enemy in Upper Canada, today known as Ontario, and severing lines of communication with their forces in the west where William Harrison was planning the recapture of Detroit, a combined force would advance on Montreal from the Niagara and Lake Champlain. A weakened British force would easily capitulate and Canada would fall. In February 1813,

he directed Dearborn to mass troops at Sacket's Harbor in preparation for the campaign.¹⁰ Learning from the harsh lessons of 1812, he identified the need to control Lake Ontario in order to be successful and that he needed naval forces to support his land forces during the assault.¹¹

In late February, Dearborn learned that General Prevost had arrived at Kingston. He presumed that a large force was gathering there, estimating it to be 6,000 troops by early March.¹² Dearborn advised Armstrong that Kingston was too strong without control of Lake Ontario and more forces, and they should attack Kingston only following York and Fort George. Consenting to the plan, Armstrong allowed York first.¹³ On April 27, 1813, Dearborn's forces under the command of Brigadier General Zebulon Pike conducted an amphibious landing with the assistance of Commodore Isaac Chauncey's squadron three miles west of York. He formed his force after fighting ashore against light resistance and then marched on York. As fate would have it, the town's armory exploded as Pike led his brigade into York, killing him with falling stone from the building. The brigade suffered heavy casualties, but the troops maintained their discipline initially, and seized the town.¹⁴

Dearborn followed this success on May 27, 1813, with an assault on Fort George under the cover of Chauncey's guns. Dearborn's forces were able to seize Fort George, but timid brigade commanders and poor synchronization of forces allowed the British force to escape to Burlington Heights. Dearborn's army attempted to follow this success by attacking toward Burlington Heights in June, but they were twice defeated before allowing themselves to be contained in Fort George. Armstrong appeared to have blamed Dearborn's sicknesses for his inability to defeat a weaker force and received permission

from President Madison to replace him.¹⁵ Despite early success, the campaign was now on hold. Brigadier General John Boyd, temporarily in command of the forces in Niagara had strict instructions to do nothing but train and defend for the time being.

In March, Armstrong had ordered Major General James Wilkinson to report to Dearborn from Louisiana. Responding in late May, Wilkinson decided to accept the promotion to Major General and join the forces in New York. He departed New Orleans in June, made it to Georgia by early July and finally reached Washington on July 31, 1813. Armstrong shared his updated operational plans with Wilkinson. Expecting that Harrison's recent success in the west would lead him to seize the Niagara region, Armstrong decided to attack Kingston from Sacket's Harbor with a combined force from Niagara and the naval base there. Simultaneously, a force from the Lake Champlain area would attack Montreal. The British would be unable to defend both places adequately and would thus lose it all. His choice of commanders during this time is puzzling as he placed two feuding generals in charge of the forces that must act together to seize the two objectives. The generals' lack of cordiality contributed to their combined failure, but it proved to be the least of their issues. Armstrong was familiar with the two generals, and the issues that split the officer corps to each feuding side.¹⁶ Armstrong, in spite of his plan for the northern campaign, allowed both generals to remain in command of the forces that he designated for each of his two major objectives. After receiving the cold shoulder during attempts to establish control of the multiple divisions in his command, Wilkinson advised that Armstrong send Hampton home if he was not going to obey.¹⁷ Armstrong instead chose to relocate personally in the north to mediate between Wilkinson and Hampton during the operation.

The soldiers in Wilkinson's divisions at Fort George and Sacket's Harbor had been idle since June. It had been a colder than usual summer until August when it was hot and humid.¹⁸ The conditions were ripe for sickness, which did indeed inflict itself on the soldiers at Fort George. The sick list went from 500 ill in June to over 1200 in August.¹⁹ The soldiers were frustrated for good reason. A small British force had kept them cooped up in the fort with few supplies for months and they were unable or unwilling to do a thing. They naturally blamed their commander, Brigadier General John Boyd for their maladies. He did not improve their living conditions and would not fight the enemy. Boyd's reputation did not help him. He was brave, but otherwise quite stupid. The most generous comments came from Colonel Winfield Scott who said he was; "courteous, amiable, and respectable . . . but vacillating and imbecile."²⁰ The incessant harassment of their outposts by native forces led by John Norton compounded the conditions at Fort George. This victorious leader of native forces at Queenston Heights was having significant success with irregular tactics against the Americans at Fort George, at one time ambushing, killing, and capturing 37 men. This harassment continued until mid-August when natives from the Iroquoian tribes in New York defeated John Norton's men.²¹

The Americans were not alone in their misery as the British were similarly bored with inaction as Lieutenant General George Prevost and his new commander of Upper Canada, Major General Francis de Rottenberg remained defensive with few troops and few resources. The war in Europe still took precedence. There was hope for 1814 as British success in Spain and Russian success against the French would free up troops for the next season, but until then Prevost just needed to maintain control of Canada. He, like

his American counterparts, would not move until control of Lake Ontario was established.²² Until then, Prevost probed the Americans at Fort George to confirm their strength, nearly capturing the town of Newark outside the fort. Pleased with the information he gained, and not seeking to spend troops on the capture of Fort George, he turned back.

In August, Wilkinson finally reached Fort George. He discovered poorly trained, sick, and unready forces. His assessments from Sacket's Harbor were no better. He immediately ordered the troops to begin training on drill and weapons handling.²³ The troops were initially receptive as they saw Wilkinson's arrival as a sign of good things to come. The leaders were not in the habit of sharing their plans with the men, so they had only rumors and assumptions to go on. Wilkinson's generals were a mixed batch. His subordinates were Major General Morgan Lewis, Brigadier Generals Jacob Brown, Leonard Covington, and Robert Swartout.²⁴ Lewis was a Revolutionary War product and a former governor of New York. He, too, was amiable, but stupid. Failing as a politician, he received a commission as a major general. Lewis was a friend of Wilkinson and brother-in-law to Secretary Armstrong.²⁵ Brown had been a successful militia general and had led the defense of Sacket's Harbor in May 1813. Commissioned in July 1813, Brown, a natural leader, was well liked and trusted by his subordinates. He was a successful landowner in New York, and had good knowledge of the area, unlike most of his peers and seniors.²⁶ Covington was a combination of military experience and political appointment as he had fought with "Mad Anthony" Wayne during the *Battle of Fallen Timbers* in addition to several Indian campaigns in the Northwest. Following this success, he served in Maryland state politics and Congress before accepting a colonel's

commission in 1808.²⁷ Swartout was a merchant and Republican heavily involved in New York state politics. Formerly a militia colonel, he commissioned in the regular force in 1813. He had a negative history with Wilkinson as Wilkinson had testified against Swartout's brother in the Burr incident and naturally, Swartout challenged Wilkinson to a duel. The two agreed to set their differences aside in order to maintain harmony, a precedent that Wilkinson did not offer to Hampton.²⁸

Wilkinson's force consisted of 9,300 men, of which 4,600 were in the Niagara and 3,200 were at Sacket's Harbor under Morgan Lewis, and 3,500 were at Burlington, Vermont with Hampton. Of those men, about 2,500 were sick in August.²⁹ In spite of the bleak conditions in camp, Wilkinson's divisions were anxious to fight. Waiting around in squalor killed their morale, but the arrival of Wilkinson and hope for a fight motivated the men to train. Wilkinson had the troops training daily to prepare them for the coming fight. Wilkinson believed that if the men were disciplined and capable of good drill, they must be successful.³⁰ Wilkinson's generals planned the action as their regiments trained the men. During a council of war, the generals decided to shift the Niagara force to Sacket's Harbor, conduct a feint at Kingston, link up with Hampton's force at the St. Lawrence, and conduct a combined attack on Montreal. While Montreal was ultimately the objective of the Madison Administration, and specifically identified by Armstrong, the direction they chose passively warped the instructions of Secretary Armstrong to Wilkinson.³¹ The two had debated in person and through letters in August as to what the objective should be.³² Secretary Armstrong unwisely had left the discussion open by offering Wilkinson the option of a direct or indirect attack. Wilkinson and his generals recognized the threat of British naval forces on Lake Ontario, so operations in Niagara or

against Kingston directly would require waiting on Chauncey to secure the lake, or risk decisive defeat.

Wilkinson ordered boats, horses, supplies, cannon, and boatmen to transfer 5,000 men and equipment up the St Lawrence.³³ He expected everything to be ready by September 22, 1813. He also ordered Hampton to be ready to move no later than September 20. While much depended on the success of Chauncey on Lake Ontario, preparations continued.³⁴ The generals were concerned about the quickly closing season and the threat, politically and militarily, of failing to prosecute the war. Learning from the example of Smyth, no general was interested in hearing or reading of accusations of cowardice as he had, and yet, the Canadian winter was fast approaching. Wilkinson directed Brown to commence training the combined force. Discipline remained an issue in spite of efforts in training. While separated between Fort George and Sacket's Harbor, the units used several different manuals for drill. While Smyth's manual was discredited in the Administration and the militia, many officers preferred it to Duane's new *Hand Book for Infantry*. One regimental commander, Colonel Eleazar Ripley of the 21st Infantry Regiment trained his men with the British manual.³⁵ It was not until Wilkinson combined the divisions at Sacket's Harbor in late September that he enforced use of Duane's manual.

While reorganizing the divisions and conducting movements to Grenadier Island throughout most of October, the Americans never were able to train effectively. In addition to prevalent maladies among the men, Wilkinson also became sick in September, a recurring issue that left him bedridden on and off throughout the remainder of the campaign. Logistical problems persisted in attaining the needed boats, but through

persistent effort, the divisions at Sacket's Harbor and Fort George were able to secure the craft. Following moderate success against Sir James Yeo's squadron on Lake Ontario, Chauncey was able to provide the cover needed for Boyd's force at Fort George to transfer to Sacket's Harbor with Wilkinson and his staff in tow.³⁶



Figure 7. New York border with Upper Canada

Source: Created by author.

Wilkinson and Armstrong continued to argue over the objectives of Kingston or Montreal while Hampton impatiently waited at Four Corners, New York on the border with Lower Canada, today the province of Quebec. He had followed orders thus far, moving his division there from Plattsburgh and he had been unimpressed with his troops, as they were a year experienced at most with minimal action to hone their fighting skills.³⁷ The continued delays frustrated not only the generals, but the fighting men as well. It helped that preparations were occurring, but once again, their force halted in preparation for the attack.

The British were likewise confused. Prevost was now certain that Kingston was the object of attack, and he began to build his defenses and call up local militias.³⁸ As the Americans continued to sit in place, the British sent spies to gather intelligence. Reports suggested that Kingston was not the target and rather Montreal was the target of the American force. Prevost then began to shift his preparation to defend Lower Canada. It appears, at this time, that Armstrong's idea to attack both simultaneously would leave one or both poorly defended. Unfortunately, by mid-October the Americans recognized that the British had reinforced Kingston and Armstrong settled on Montreal. At the same time, he began to order the preparation of winter quarters in a sign the operation would be aborted.³⁹ He did not share this information with Wilkinson or Hampton. To increase the confusion, Wilkinson now advocated for the seizure of Kingston and Upper Canada as sickness, the threat of Yeo's squadron, and the late season put too much risk on a movement to Montreal. Armstrong insisted on Montreal, while leaving the conversation to Wilkinson to accept responsibility. Neither of the men wanted blame for an operation that was already falling apart.⁴⁰ While Brown and Swartout had been very successful in

securing supplies, the sickness of the men and repeated delays in movement hampered the effort.



- Lake Ontario entrance to the St. Lawrence River.
1. Wilkinson's division masses at Sacket's Harbor.
 2. The Division moves to Grenadier Island
 3. Wilkinson's division stops short of Prescott

Figure 8. Lake Ontario entrance to the St. Lawrence River

Source: Created by author.

Wilkinson's divisions at Sacket's Harbor began transfer to Grenadier Island situated off the east shore of Lake Ontario halfway between Sacket's Harbor and

Kingston. This location would have been a good embarkation point to attack Kingston, but instead they would go to Montreal. Interestingly, neither Wilkinson nor Armstrong informed Chauncey of the change.⁴¹ During the transportation of the divisions between October 16 to 23, tragedy struck once again. Bad weather and lake water destroyed nearly half of the army's supplies. Conditions continued in misery on Grenadier Island as they had at Sacket's Harbor, but morale among the troops was high.⁴² At last, the armies were on the move albeit very slowly. During transport, more than a third of the transports were ruined or lost, men and units were scattered, and ten inches of snow fell from October 27 to 28. Wilkinson quickly ordered the winter clothing to Grenadier as the army had left it behind at Sacket's Harbor. Fighting the elements, bad luck, and delays, the last regiment arrived on November 3, 1813. Wilkinson's force of about 7,400 men was anxious to winter in Montreal.⁴³ On October 27, 1813, Brown's brigade embarked for French Creek where the divisions would rendezvous prior to beginning their advance down the St Lawrence River. Winter storms would harass and slow movement for a couple days for the rest of the divisions, but by November, movement commenced.

The British were prepared. Throughout October as the object of the Americans became clearer, General Prevost had reinforced Lower Canada and called up the militia to protect Montreal. He established what we would call a defense in depth along the St Lawrence River at Prescott and along the Chateauguay River to Montreal. The British were ready when Hampton began his attack on October 21, without confirmation from Wilkinson that the combined force was ready to move. On October 25, Hampton's 2,300 men attacked a picket of 300 British regulars, Canadian militia, and 22 Abenaki warriors.⁴⁴ A combination of indecisiveness from Hampton, leaders abandoning their

men, and overall poor discipline resulted in an embarrassing loss. To his defense, he had received direction only a week earlier from Armstrong to begin procuring supplies for winter quarters, which may have confused him as to the intent for Montreal that season. Having received no word from Wilkinson, Hampton held a council of war that decided to winter at Four Corners, New York. Hampton ended his campaign shortly before Wilkinson had even begun.

As the weather began to clear on November 3, Wilkinson's divisions still at Grenadier finally made their way by boat to French Creek where Brown's brigade waited. The St Lawrence was the main line of communication between Upper and Lower Canada, and should it be severed, Upper Canada would likely fall shortly thereafter. Wilkinson's army would pass five sets of rapids and a small force at Prescott on their route to Montreal. Chauncey's naval force, built for the lake, would have trouble supporting the movement, especially since Yeo's squadron was still capable of impeding movement. Brown would lead, clearing the way before the army. While waiting at French Creek, Brown's 3rd Artillery, acting as infantry, had been attacked by a small British naval squadron.⁴⁵ Brown was successful that day and by November 3, his brigade prepared for the arrival of Wilkinson's army.

Wilkinson arrived ill and barely capable of walking. His physician gave him laudanum, a concoction that included opium and alcohol. This was a common medicine of the day, and it had the effect one would expect. Wilkinson estimated that 1,400 of his men were unable to perform basic duties. Others estimated as high as 80 percent of the men had some degree of dysentery.⁴⁶ Wilkinson's army was short on supplies due to the losses at Grenadier Island. By November 5, after detailed planning with Morgan Lewis,

Wilkinson ordered his army to embark on the St Lawrence. He intended to depart at 5 a.m. and bypass the town of Prescott during hours of darkness. After five hours of confusion, the flotilla was able to start movement down the river. At the same time, Yeo had begun positioning his ships to intercept the flotilla, and Chauncey countered him. They were unable to engage each other or the flotilla effectively and Yeo returned to Kingston. Chauncey, hoping to avoid becoming stuck in ice, followed him before returning to Sacket's Harbor a couple days later.⁴⁷ Wilkinson's army had a rough time of the trip as river conditions and the inexperience of his boatmen created confusion. By the time the last units came in the night of November 5, they were scattered over four miles between Morrisville and Hoag's farm, just short of Prescott.⁴⁸

The following morning, November 6, being unable to pass Prescott the night previous, the army began to gather near Hoag's Farm from the scattered positions where they had rested. Wilkinson used the opportunity to write to Hampton with instructions for their combined assault on Montreal. At this point, he had learned of Hampton's defeat along the Chateaugay River, but not of his decision to cease his campaign. Armstrong had returned to Washington and was no longer the intermediary for the two quarrelling generals. Wilkinson, without word from Hampton, continued down the river passing Prescott the evening of November 6, risking the force to his rear, dismissing the threat rather than isolate or neutralize it at the cost of men and time.

Wilkinson's army began its movement around 8 p.m. As luck would have it, a heavy fog provided concealment for the flotilla in spite of the full moon that night, until a wind began to clear the fog and the guns at Prescott were able to engage the flotilla. The flotilla was able to bypass Prescott in spite of the guns with only one craft struck, killing

one and wounding only a few.⁴⁹ As news spread of the American flotilla's movement toward Montreal, De Rottenberg dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Morrison with 800 soldiers to follow and report Wilkinson's movement.

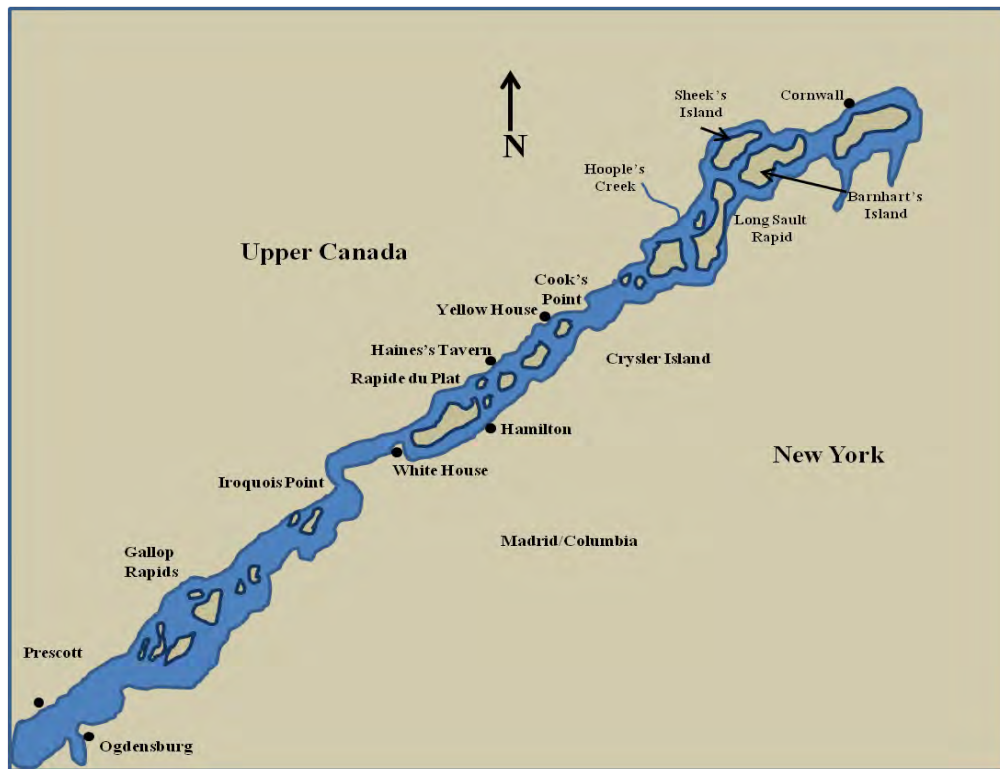


Figure 9. St. Lawrence River from Prescott to Cornwall

Source: Created by author.

Lieutenant Colonel Morrison was a fourteen-year veteran of the British Army who had served extensively, but had not experienced any combat action until Cryslar's Farm. His second in command, Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey, had served extensively in combat in Egypt, South Africa, and India. They led a small force of 800 soldiers comprised of the 49th and 89th Foot, a couple of schooners from Yeo's squadron, and

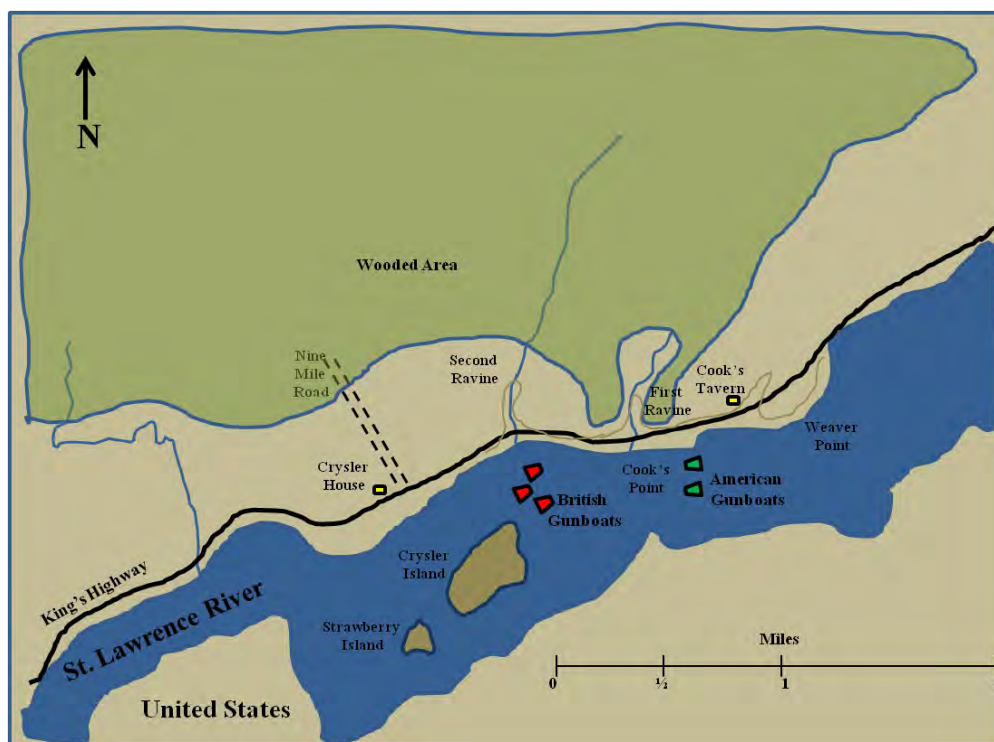
seven gunboats. In addition to this force departing Upper Canada on November 7 for Prescott, a small force with two 6-pdr. guns and militia departed Prescott to follow and harass Wilkinson's force as it continued down the river. While the Americans made an effort to end the harassment with small parties crossing to the Canadian side, they were not able to rid themselves of the problem.

On November 8, as Wilkinson was able to get his army on the move, he decided to move 400 dragoons and 250 artillery team horses to clear the Canadian side of the river and protect his flank. With Brown in front as a small guard force, he anticipated an easier movement through the remaining rapids. There was no need to add challenges to this high-risk movement. Boyd's brigade was the only remaining force left on the American side of the river. At the end of the day on November 8, Wilkinson had become aware of Morrison's observation force approaching from the rear and decided to hold a council of war. The council decided to continue moving toward Montreal.⁵⁰ About the same time, Hampton had received Wilkinson's letters and chose to winter at Plattsburgh rather than continue to Montreal.

On the British side, Morrison reached Prescott the night of November 8. Lieutenant Colonel Pearson, the commander at Prescott, requested to join his force adding three 6-pdr. guns and five companies of foot bringing Morrison's force to just fewer than 1,200 men and 30 Mohawk warriors.⁵¹ The morning of November 9, they made first contact probing Wilkinson's rear guard. The fighting did not last long, but the harassment continued through the next two days leading up to Chrysler's Farm.

On November 10, Morrison's men once again engaged the American pickets, intending to withdraw after some harassment. The Americans nearly pulled him into

combat, but he was not ready to engage fully. He was aware of the numerical superiority of the Americans and his position was poor. Brown and about 2,000 men had continued down the river, but 4-5,000 troops remained near Chrysler's Farm. That evening, Morrison received orders to return to Kingston, as the British feared that a significant force had remained at Sacket's Harbor, a result of bad intelligence. At the same time, Wilkinson gave orders to Boyd to avoid a fight, but should the enemy attack to turn about and destroy the force.⁵² While Brown's brigade continued down river, the remaining force spent the day attacking and withdrawing as the British refused to engage, but rather chose to harass. Around 3 p.m., Brown's brigade came in contact against a force of Canadian militia at Cornwall. After pausing to assess the situation and the terrain, Brown synchronized the use of artillery and flanking elements to cause the enemy to break contact. Lewis, who was commanding in lieu of a sick Wilkinson, spent his day marching and countermarching.



Crysler's Farm November 11, 1813

1. British Gunboats harass Americans near Cook's point before setting in near Crysler Island to support Morrison's flank.

Figure 10. Chrysler's Farm November 11, 1813

Source: Created by author.

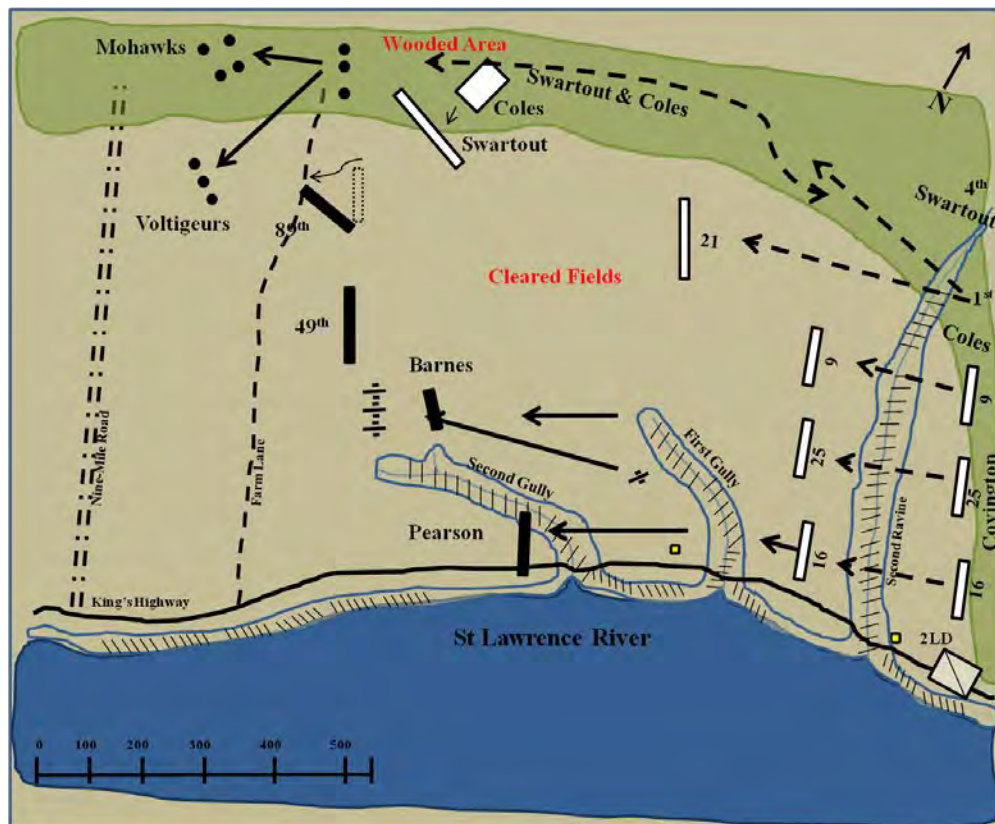
The morning of Thursday, November 11, 1813 was overcast and windy.⁵³ Morrison, suspecting the Americans might continue their attack from the day prior had positioned himself at the ready with 1,200 soldiers. He had the river with his gunboats on his right flank and swampy woods to his left. This allowed him to defend against a frontal assault and thus helped mitigate the threat of as many as 5,000 American troops overwhelming his small force.⁵⁴ The Americans, on the other hand, were preparing to continue down the longest of the remaining rapids. Lewis, following orders received the previous night from Wilkinson, ordered Boyd to begin loading the boats to move down

river. Wilkinson, however, had wanted to wait to move until hearing from Brown, but did not inform Lewis or Boyd of this decision. Wilkinson was sick and in bed and refusing visitors, thus failing to personally command once again. Instead of allowing Lewis to take command, he continued to give orders from bed, which created further confusion. At about 10 a.m., the Americans saw British gunboats approaching. The day began with a short naval skirmish between gunboats for an hour or two. The gunboats backed off and settled in to support Morrison's forces still in place and prepared for a fight.

After a couple more hours, Morrison grew impatient and sent a small force to probe the Americans. Three companies and 30 Mohawk Indians scouted ahead through the woods toward the Americans. Boyd continued to receive confusing and contradictory orders from Wilkinson who refused to take command of his division, nor completely give up command to Lewis. Eventually four pieces of artillery landed to reinforce Boyd's rear guard in the event he had to engage the British force. Unfortunately, the horses required to pull the artillery pieces were forward with Brown's brigade miles downriver along with the senior artillery leadership. Woodford's Second Light Dragoons had to use their horses to pull four 6-pdr. guns to the fight with Lieutenant Henry Knox Craig of the Second Artillery Regiment. These would add to the two 6-pdr. guns already in the care of Lieutenant Armstrong Irving. As the operation commenced, word reached Boyd of the companies approaching through the woods. He quickly reacted by sending Swartout's Fourth Brigade, Covington's Third Brigade, and his own First Brigade into the woods to attack the approaching enemy force. Rather than form into order of battle, they simply moved by column to the enemy. They had only the two 6-pdr. guns available for artillery support and no synchronization from a commanding general.

The 21st Regiment under Major Joseph Grafton, as Ripley was initially separated from his rapidly moving force, moved through woods with the 11th and 14th Regiments of Swartout's Brigade, and quickly engaged and drove off the enemy. Covington's Brigade followed closely and deliberately behind until the cheers ahead caused the men to become excited and the officers quickly lost control of the formation. As the two brigades moved through the woods skirmishing with the three companies of Canadian Voltigeurs at 50 men per company, their superior numbers began to overwhelm. The Canadians were able to delay the Americans enough to allow Morrison to prepare for the advancing Americans.⁵⁵ Boyd likely expected the same sort of fight that he had encountered on November 10, but it would appear that Morrison needed a successful fight or retire as he was disobeying orders by refusing to return to Kingston.

As Boyd's brigades moved through the woods, Covington created a broad front in columns between the river and the swamp woods to the north. Swartout's and Isaac Cole's brigades formed by column on the north flank and continued to push the Canadians back. Morrison simultaneously deployed his 49th and 89th Foot forward on line near the center to the woods while Pearson and three companies from the 89th under Captain George Barnes posted forward with a gully between them and their foe. Captain Henry Jackson deployed two 6-pdr. guns on the right of the main line of 89th and 49th Foot and one 6-pdr. forward with Barnes under Lieutenant Henry Kersteman.



1. Covington's Brigade challenges Pearson and Barnes for control of the fields.
2. Swartout and Cole attempt to outflank the 8th Foot through the woods to the north.

Figure 11. Phase I: Crysler's Farm

Source: Created by author.

The 21st Regiment was the first American force to exit the woods. As the three brigades cleared the woods into the field, the British positioning impressed them, while at the same time the British began to worry about the very large force facing them. Expecting much of the same maneuvering and defending as the day prior, Boyd hesitated a moment, but his overeager soldiers continued moving. The officers were unable to gain control and slow their movement, so they continued in spite of the lack of artillery support. Conversely, Jackson had prepared his guns and commenced firing on the

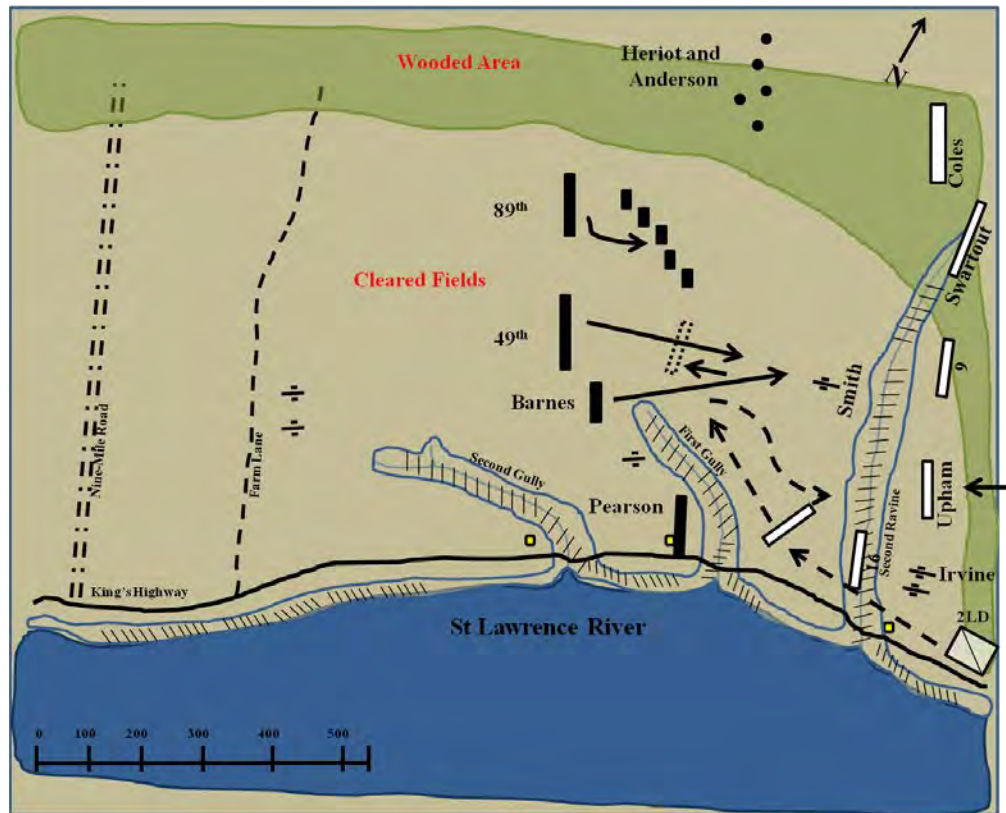
brigades as they exited the woods. In the meantime, Lewis and Wilkinson, who were sick in bed, heard the firing and were surprised as they thought Boyd would have continued movement down the river. As the fighting commenced, Colonel Joseph Swift began to rally Irvine and Craig, hastening their guns to the battle. Unfortunately, due to the lack of synchronized effort from the brigades and the guns, Craig did not begin movement to the fight until an hour after the belligerents fired the first shots. Out on the field as the British guns tore into the American columns, the officers of the regiments attempted to form their men into line. The men had not trained as entire brigades and the movement was a challenge, especially without the cover of artillery support. To add to the confusion, the men would not fire on command, but rather as they were able and felt inclined. Boyd's brigades were in desperate need of artillery support and withdrawal or hesitation were not options he had with the limited control his officers had over their men. He chose to attack and hope the artillery joined him soon.

Boyd directed Swartout and Cole to attack the British left flank via the swampy wood to the north. Ripley's 21st Regiment from Cole's First Brigade remained on line at the north end of the field engaging the British 89th. Simultaneously, Covington's Brigade marched westward with the 16th, 25th, and 9th Regiments abreast on line. Covington attacked Pearson as Colonel Cromwell Pearce ordered his 16th Regiment to charge through the first gully driving Barnes' and his gun back to the second gully near the 49th's right flank. The 16th also pushed Pearson's line beyond the second gully.

In response, Morrison wheeled the 89th to protect his left flank. His disciplined force fired volleys into Swartout's and Cole's brigades as they attempted to form from column to line. Ripley's 21st Regiment continued to fire with poor discipline, wasting

their ammunition. As the 21st ran low, Swartout's and Cole's brigades began to waiver. Swartout's Brigade broke just as Cole's regiments exited the woods. The confusion led to the retreat of the two brigades. About the same time, the 21st ran out of ammunition and broke contact. The two brigades reformed in the wood line on Covington's right flank. The 89th and 49th continued to fire on the Americans as they retreated to the safety of the woods. Their unit discipline had been the difference in effectiveness at this point in the fight.

With the left flank secure, Morrison was able to focus on Covington's Brigade to his front. As the 16th Regiment under Pearce began to re-form at the top of the first gully, Covington received a mortal wound to the stomach. He gave command of the brigade to Pearce and the men evacuated him to the rear of the line. Pearce continued the attack, exchanging fire with the British. The 25th and the 9th Regiments were engaged with the 89th and 49th. The 25th Regiment received the worst of Jackson's guns and broke into retreat behind the second ravine. As Pearce's 16th and 9th Regiments ran low on ammunition, they withdrew to the second ravine to wait for resupply. Barnes, Pearson, and Kersteman reoccupied their positions at the first gully. It was not until 3 p.m. that Pearce received artillery support from Irvine and Craig.



1. 89th Foot attempts to capture artillery, and is repelled.
2. 2nd Light Dragoons attempts flank attack on 49th Foot to assist artillery.
3. Barnes and 49th Foot kill Smith and capture gun.

Figure 12. Phase II: Crysler's Farm

Source: Created by author.

Irvine positioned his two guns on Covington's left flank and began to fire into the 49th and 89th with good effect. Lieutenant Henry Craig moved his guns with Lieutenant William Smith to the center of the line, forward placed between the 16th and 9th Regiments that the dragoons replenished with ammunition. The British 49th advanced straight toward the gun and received heavy fire with devastating effect. By this time, Boyd managed to re-form the brigades and continue the attack. With artillery support, he might have more success. His guns repulsed the 49th that then drew up on line. Barnes'

companies seized the opportunity to advance to capture Smith's guns. Colonel Jean-Baptiste de Barth Walbach, seeing that Smith's guns were in danger, ordered Woodford's Dragoons to charge the 49th Foot's right flank. The dragoons braved a barrage of fire from Kersteman and Barnes before the 49th poured volleys into them. Although the British forced them to break from the attack, they had provided the needed cover for Craig to get all but one of his guns drawn back to the second gully. The last gun manned by Smith continued to fire. After all of his men were killed, Smith continued to fire until the 89th Foot killed him with a final volley. The loss of Smith's gun caused a change in Boyd's thinking. He claimed to have received orders to return to the boats, but could not remember who gave them. Whether by fear or by orders, instead of continuing the attack, he ordered the withdrawal of the brigades. He left a small rear security of boat guards to defend his withdrawal, but the advancing British drove them off as well.

As the battle ended, Wilkinson ordered the troops to embark on their boats and continue down the river. He ordered Walbach to have his dragoons cart the guns by land to Cornwall to meet up with Brown while the rest of the army left him alone within a mile of the enemy. There was, as had become the norm, confusion loading the ships. The men and young leaders believed they had beaten the British and could not understand why they rushed away and did not finish off the enemy. Some of the boats in the flotilla had already left before the army returned from the battle. It looked as if the British had beaten the Americans and Wilkinson was fleeing, regardless of what the American soldiers and leaders believed. In less than two hours from the final shots, the Americans had departed down the river.⁵⁶

Both sides claimed victory at Crysler's Farm, but the British held the terrain, and the Americans appeared to have fled. The Americans believed themselves to have fought off the British to continue their assault toward Montreal.⁵⁷ When Wilkinson received a letter from Hampton informing him of his winter plans and that he would not join him in Montreal, Wilkinson held a council of war with his generals. They decided to winter at French Mills with their 6,000 healthy troops.⁵⁸ The division was broken. Many believed they could take Montreal, especially with Brown's leadership. The young officers, feeling they had won at Crysler's Farm, did not understand why they quit. Wilkinson and Hampton left the army shortly after the season ended, Hampton hoping to avoid arrest. Wilkinson remained for the rest of the season before Armstrong relieved him in the spring following a failed battle at Lacolle Mill in March 1814. The Administration later court-martialed and acquitted Wilkinson for dereliction of duty and drunkenness. Prevost relieved De Rottenberg and John Vincent in Niagara due to their insistence that Morrison return to Kingston. Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond and Major General Phineas Riall, recently arrived from Europe, replaced them.⁵⁹

The failure of this disastrous campaign presented Secretary Armstrong with the opportunity to remove incompetent politically appointed leaders and promote talented officers to senior positions. Brigadier General Brown was promoted to major general, while Colonels Daniel Bissell, Edmund Gaines, Alexander Macomb, Eleazar Ripley, Winfield Scott, and Joseph Swift were promoted to brigadier general. Armstrong had Dearborn, Lewis, and Boyd sent to postings where they could not harm the war effort while Swartout remained with the quartermaster department.⁶⁰ Secretary Armstrong did not accept responsibility for the failed campaign, in spite of the several opportunities he

had to remove his two generals prior to the start of the operation. He had failed to ensure that the Administration's objectives were met, namely seizing Niagara, Kingston, and Montreal. His actions following the campaign suggest that he did place blame on the leaders rather than simply to continue blaming the soldiers.

The soldiers, however, were not clear of blame. They did not exhibit disciplined proficiency under fire, but they did show courage under the circumstances, a point made by the generals.⁶¹ They were a product of poor leadership and lack of uniform training. Wilkinson failed to ensure that his officers trained his force uniformly, ordering the use of one system of discipline far too late to be effective. He failed to execute the campaign aggressively, appearing at times to prefer inaction. During the execution of the movement along the St Lawrence, he made some good decisions, such as clearing both sides of the river of enemy troops, but he failed to ensure the security of his rear formation. He also did not ensure Boyd had the adequate support required to confront the force to his rear. His confused orders and counter-orders failed to synchronize his force. This could have been mitigated had Boyd controlled his brigades and ensured they had the artillery support required prior to deploying against Morrison.

The loss at Crysler's Farm was a rather fitting end to the symphony of disorder as America's largest fielded army of the war withered away in the hands of incompetent senior leaders. As one reflects on the comparison of the army at Queenston Heights and the army at Crysler's Farm, there is a significant improvement in the quality of soldier available. While inexperience abounded at Crysler's Farm, the force was comprised of regulars who were willing and excited to fight unlike the militia who refused to cross at Queenston Heights. Many of the men and leaders had experienced combat; some fought

in both battles, such as Colonel Winfield Scott. Logistics issues had improved significantly. Wilkinson began his movement with adequate supplies for the attack. The early days of the 1813 campaign season showed that the leaders had learned many tactical lessons from 1812. The U.S. Navy continued building a small force on Lakes Erie and Ontario and sought control of the lakes. The Army began to use naval support during their attacks at York and Fort George. Zebulon Pike even demonstrated a good amphibious landing away from the enemy's main defense. There is no doubt that the army of 1813 improved significantly following 1812. The Administration, however, failed to learn one key lesson in 1812. They chose to continue selecting political appointees for leadership. They could no longer argue that lack of experience was the problem forestalling success. These leaders had a large force with combat experience that was motivated to fight, and they still failed. This lesson was so clearly apparent in 1813, that political pressure forced Armstrong and Madison to make changes that would greatly increase the effectiveness of the army in 1814. Wilkinson, Boyd, and Lewis had squandered their resources between June and November 1813. In fact, Brown was the only general to perform well under Wilkinson's leadership. As a result, he would be the one to lead America's major campaign in 1814.

¹ Donald E. Graves, *Field of Glory: The Battle of Chrysler's Farm, 1813* (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 1999), 26-27.

² Ibid., 32-33.

³ Michael A Bonura, *Under The Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from the War of 1812 to the Outbreak of WWII* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 46.

⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁵ Edward C. Skeen, *John Armstrong Jr., 1758-1843: A Biography* (Syracuse: The University of Syracuse, 1981), 126-131, 135; John Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983), 278-288.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Armstrong, *Notices of The War of 1812 Vol I* (New-York: George Dearborn Publisher, 1836), 221.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Samuel R. Brown, *An Authentic History of the Second War for Independence Comprising Details of the Military and Naval Operations, From the Commencement to the Close of the Recent War; Enriched with Numerous Geographical and Biographical Notes* (Auburn: J. G. Hathaway Publisher, 1815), 15.

¹² Graves, *Field of Glory*, 22.

¹³ Armstrong, *Notices*, 222.

¹⁴ Armstrong, *Notices*, 402-404; Dearborn to Armstrong, Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy, April 28 1813.

¹⁵ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁷ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 33; Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Daniel Parker Papers, Wilkinson to Secretary of War, 26 August 1813.

¹⁸ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 34.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 35; Scott Winfield, *Memoirs of Lieut-General Scott, LL.D. Written by Himself* (New York: Sheldon, 1864) vol 1, 83-94, quoted in Graves, *Field of Glory*, 35.

²¹ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 39-41.

²² Ibid., 24-25.

²³ Ibid., 46-47.

- ²⁴ Ibid., 43-46.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 44.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 45.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 44-45.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 48.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 47.
- ³¹ Ibid., 49.
- ³² Brown, *An Authentic History*, 58-60.
- ³³ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 50.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 166-167.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 60-62.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 55.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 69.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 73, 75.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 76.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 76-79.
- ⁴² Ibid., 80.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 74-78.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 99-100.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 119-122.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 122-123.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 133-135.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 142-145.

⁵¹ Ibid., 148.

⁵² Ibid., 152, 160.

⁵³ Ibid., 185.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 188-189.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 199-202.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 259-261.

⁵⁷ Paris M. Davis, *The Authentick [sic] History of the Late War between The United States and Great Britain, with a Full Account of Every Battle* (Ithaca, NY: Published by Davis and Saunders 1829), 83. Boyd's Account of the battle at Chrysler's Field, H.Q. 3d Military District, New York, April 29 1815 to the Secretary of War; William James, *A Full and Correct Account of the Military Occurrences of The Late War Between Great Britain and the United States of America; with an Appendix and Plates* (London: Printed for the Author, 1818), Vol I, 467-476. Wilkinson's letters to the Secretary of War dated November 16 and 18, 1813, and Morrison's letter dated November 12, 1813, to De Rottenburg with their accounts of the battle.

⁵⁸ Graves, *Field of Glory*, 285.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 308.

⁶¹ James, *The Late War Between Great Britain and the United States*, 470-476.

CHAPTER 4

BATTLE OF CHIPPAWA

The Madison Administration continued, after nearly two years of war, to seek answers to the embarrassing campaigns thus far. While 1813 had begun with a quest for small wins to gain speed to great victory, 1814 had extra pressure to succeed quickly. In March, Napoleon abdicated his throne and the British began preparing to redirect their veteran force to North America. As each successive campaign to conquer British North America had floundered and died at great cost under poor leadership, the Administration was under increased political pressure to win. Should 1814 fail, the United States would be in very poor position for future peace negotiations.

The 1813 campaign season ended with mixed results. While Wilkinson and Hampton had failed embarrassingly in the north, Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry enjoyed great success in the Battle of Lake Erie in September while Major General William Henry Harrison gained two victories at the Battle of the Thames and Detroit in October.¹ These victories were softened by the British razing of American towns along the Niagara in December, in addition to the seizure of Fort Niagara across the river from Fort George. There was no doubt that change was required. The mix of success and failure highlighted the quality of the American soldier and more importantly, the extreme incompetence of several of their politically appointed leaders such as James Wilkinson, Wade Hampton, and Morgan Lewis, the brother-in-law of the Secretary of War.² Armstrong relocated Lewis to the 3rd Military District to recover from illness, also a location where he could not get into too much trouble. Dearborn changed station to see to the defense of New York City. The success of more aggressive youthful leaders received

recognition and the Administration promoted experienced leaders such as Jacob Brown and George Izard to major general, and Eleazar Ripley and Winfield Scott to brigadier general.

With the leadership changes, adjustments came in training and care of the soldiers. The 1813 campaign had shown that the American soldier was becoming more professional, a loose term in this war, and willing to fight at risk of death or in many cases, disease. Jacob Brown recognized the need to take better care of his soldiers while they were camped at French Mills over the winter of 1813 to 1814. He quickly began working to improve their living conditions in addition to making changes in how the camp ran. It is interesting to note that in his letters to his superiors as well as in his diary, he often referred to his subordinates as his family.³ This very personal attribution to his men played a large part in his ability to command their loyalty and followership.

Winfield Scott was also instrumental in the improvement of soldier care during the early months of 1814. His devotion to training would prove to be crucial to the success of the division. Congress made Brown and Scott's job somewhat easier when they voted to increase the size of the Army to 62,000; although it only reached 40,000 by the spring fighting season. They implemented additional signing bonuses to \$124 from the previous \$40 and increased the number of officers and non-commissioned officers in a regiment in order to boost recruiting efforts.⁴ While these changes improved numbers and quality of soldiers, Congress intended to boost the Army's ability to counter the threat posed by veteran British troops from Wellington's Spanish campaigns that were beginning to arrive in the American theater. Secretary Armstrong began 1814 by reorganizing his forces in the north. The Left Division fell under Major General Jacob

Brown and the Right Division under Major General George Izard. When the two forces combined, Izard would be senior.

The British situation was improving quickly following the 1813 season. Spring brought thousands of reinforcements for Lieutenant General George Prevost to defend the north, and increase attacks along the eastern coast, as well as the south. Wellington's regiments were coming by the boatload. The first wave of regiments arrived from Ireland in late May with the 16th Regiment of Foot, followed by the 97th Foot, and a battalion each from Holland and Grenada. Wellington's first regiment, the 6th Regiment of Foot, arrived on June 26, 1814, followed by the 3rd and 5th Regiments of Foot. From June to August the units continued to pour in.⁵ Prevost's experience with the Americans proved that they would easily break under poor leadership and training. With the augmentation of His Majesty's best regiments, he would have little problem securing Canada and making America pay for thinking she could best the chief defender of freedom in the world.

The Madison Administration's strategic outlook did not change significantly. It had the added pressure of increased British attention, but still largely focused on Kingston and Montreal. Madison and Armstrong identified Montreal as the center of gravity for Canada, and Kingston was a critical vulnerability. At the military level, Prevost's growing land force was the center of gravity and the Royal Navy its key critical vulnerability. Madison and Armstrong believed they needed to cut the British lines of communication along the St. Lawrence. The way to do this was to seize Kingston and reduce Prescott. To cut their lines of communication to the west, the U.S. had to seize Burlington Heights and York, the capital of Upper Canada. Once accomplished, should

circumstances allow, they could seize Montreal and push the British out of North America. One confusing addition by Madison was the seizure of Mackinac, connecting Lakes Huron and Michigan. Armstrong argued against it saying that the object of such a target was the target itself, as it had no other purpose. He felt it would take naval power away from the more important objects of Lakes Erie and Ontario, and, by default, Kingston and Montreal.⁶

The Administration's strategic objectives as the season opened focused on the Niagara and Lake Champlain areas and thus the 9th Military District commanded by Major General James Wilkinson until April. General Brown and the Left Division would move to Sacket's Harbor in March, with responsibility "for the border between Buffalo, New York, on Lake Erie to Ogdensburg, New York, on the St. Lawrence River."⁷ He would command three brigades under the leadership of Brigadiers Eleazar Ripley, Winfield Scott, and Peter B. Porter. Following the assignment of forces, Armstrong sent guidance to Brown in the form of two contradicting and confusing letters. The first instructed him to move against Kingston across the ice, should it be possible, and the second, to retake Fort Niagara. Armstrong instructed Brown to use the second letter as a ruse to confuse the enemy as to his true objective.⁸ Brown, upon receipt of the letters, met with Commodore Isaac Chauncey to discuss their options at Kingston. They determined that it would be too risky to attack across the ice at that time and Chauncey convinced Brown that the second letter provided a second alternative as Kingston was not practicable. Armstrong did not redirect Brown, but rather wished him luck in spite of his mistake.

The first move of the 1814 spring campaign failed under the final leadership of Major General Wilkinson. In April, he sent a large force to Lacolle Mill in Lower Canada where the British soundly repelled him. Following the engagement, Armstrong relieved him of command and charged him with neglect of duty and intoxication. Wilkinson received an acquittal of the charges in January 1815, but remained safely sidelined for the remainder of the 1814 campaign season.⁹

Several small skirmishes helped to shape the conditions of the 1814 season following the month of May. While Brown had ensured that Sacket's Harbor was better defended in 1814 than the previous spring, his supply depot at Oswego was not defended well. Both the Americans and the British understood that control of Lake Ontario was key to controlling the land routes supplying their armies. Commodore Sir James Yeo refused to fight without assured victory, and Commodore Chauncey had become hesitant to leave his port undefended except that Yeo present a viable target. Neither adversary seemed inclined to engage in a sea battle. Chauncey spent the spring of 1814 building two new ships, the guns for which were at Oswego. Brown received intelligence in late April that Yeo and a large British force were planning to attack Oswego, so he sent Lieutenant Colonel George Mitchell and 342 artillerymen to protect the naval stores at Oswego. Mitchell's men were able to bring five cannon to working order and establish a hasty defense. On May 5, 1814, Yeo attacked, but was unable to bring his troops in to land under adverse winds and effective artillery fire from Mitchell's force. He was delayed long enough for Mitchell and his men to remove most of the naval stores and salvage all but nine cannon in a controlled withdrawal. The British were able to capture

the cannon and a large amount of food stores. For his defense and quick thinking, President Madison awarded Mitchell a brevet promotion to colonel.

The resulting British action following Oswego was the blockade of Sacket's Harbor. As his ships neared completion, Chauncey would require his guns in order to break the blockade. He sent Master Commandant Melancthon Woolsey with Major Daniel Appling and nearly 150 men from the 1st US Rifle Regiment and 150 Oneida Indians to escort thirty-four heavy guns from Oswego Falls to Sacket's Harbor. The plan was to move the guns on bateaux along the shore. Appling and his men with their Indian allies would provide convoy security. When Yeo realized the operation was ongoing, he sent a force of 7 ships and 200 Royal Marines to intercept the cargo. Woolsey maneuvered the convoy into Big Sandy Creek and left a small ship in sight to bait the British while Appling set an ambush.¹⁰ On May 30, the British walked into the trap. They found themselves surrounded and caught in the crosshairs of expert sharpshooters. The British lost 19 troops and over 170 surrendered. Woolsey and Appling successfully delivered the guns to Chauncey's ships.¹¹

Brown initially remained headquartered at Sacket's Harbor as it was under constant threat of British attack.¹² He ordered Scott to begin training the division at Buffalo. Scott accepted this task with great energy. He intended to make this army the best fielded by the United States in the war, which it proved to be. In 1814, the soldiers available had largely fought in at least one battle. Their experience, and that of their leaders, proved instrumental in the preparation for the 1814 season. While Scott had risen in the ranks through experience and skill, Porter and Ripley were two of the few politically appointed officers to remain in command entering 1814. Ripley had gained

experience at Crysler's Farm, the capture of Fort George, and the raid on York. Porter was efficient and well liked in addition to his experiences of the past two years showing him to be aggressive and brave like Scott and Brown.¹³ Scott had fought in several major battles during the war, such as Queenston Heights and Fort George, and gained promotions along the way commensurate with his professional skill. Unlike Van Rensselaer, Scott was very studious of his profession. He carried around a portable bookshelf with military texts from Europe that he studied in his free time.¹⁴

The division arrived at Buffalo in April 1814 and set up camp at Flint Hill near Lake Erie. The camp was chosen because of the environmental aspects bent toward a decent quality of life. Scott, learning lessons from the past two years, focused on strict camp hygiene. He ordered soldiers to bathe regularly and upheld standards in uniform wear and care. He ensured strict discipline to include capital punishment for desertion.¹⁵ His regulations applied to the whole of the division, including officers. Scott ensured the men received proper uniforms before they went to battle. Unable to acquire enough blue uniform jackets, he received gray jackets. The 21st Regiment received the few blue jackets while the rest received gray. The important detail was that all the men be uniform. He ensured they had the proper equipment and that it was serviceable.¹⁶

Scott was as serious about discipline in the form of training as he was behavioral and hygienic discipline. The men trained between seven and ten hours a day using French tactics of the battalion and the line.¹⁷ Scott directed his leaders to use the French system as found in Smyth's regulations. He also had them become acquainted with Von Steuben's "Blue Book".¹⁸ Scott had them execute drill by company, regiment, brigade, and division. They conducted mock battles and blank fire exercises in between frequent

inspections.¹⁹ A lesson Brown had learned the previous season under Wilkinson was the need to train the entire army together prior to battle. Scott's efforts would pay handsomely. He created small sections in each regiment called Pioneers that acted as a combat engineer or sapper platoon might today. They carried axes and shovels in addition to their weapon in order to clear routes for the regiment. During withdrawal, the pioneers would create obstacles to delay the enemy.²⁰ By June, the army had filled out its ranks. The division had two brigades of regular army, one brigade mixed with Pennsylvania militia, Indians of the Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, and Tuscarora led by Chief Red Jacket, a small company of Canadian Volunteers, and a company of New York Volunteers.²¹ Scott's strict regimen of discipline and training created a professional looking force, ready and eager to fight when Brown arrived in June.

On the morning of July 2, 1814, Brown and Porter conducted a leaders' recon of Fort Erie and the Canadian shore to identify points of debarkation. They returned to camp, began a planning session, and Brown gave the order for the Left Division to cross over to the Canadian side.²² Secretary Armstrong commented in his *Notices of the War of 1812*, that the plan had been to start much earlier, but circumstances delayed finalization until June due to late call-ups of the militia and volunteers as well as the inability of Chauncey to get his fleet out on Lake Ontario. He credited Brown with getting his troops to Buffalo, although with significant delay.²³ The plan that Madison and Armstrong designed was that Brown would attack to seize Burlington Heights, reinforce it, and if Chauncey succeeded in defeating Yeo on Ontario, they would combine forces to defeat York and then seize Kingston while Izard would conduct a feint toward Montreal.²⁴

Armstrong ordered Brown to seize Fort Erie, “menace” Fort George, and in concert with Chauncey, seize and fortify Burlington Heights.²⁵

Brown ordered Scott and Ripley to cross their brigades first, the majority of the transportation allotted to Scott’s 1st Brigade. Ripley complained that he did not have enough transport to move sufficient force across as he expected to fight ashore. Ripley’s complaint was justified as Madison’s plan to seize Fort Mackinac had removed the bulk of the Lake Erie fleet that Brown required for his transports. He had just enough to transport Scott’s brigade and a portion of Ripley’s. Moreover, Ripley was hesitant as he claimed to have seen lights and smoke in his area the night previous. Brown suspecting he may have been unnecessarily fearful, ordered him to cross as planned. Ripley allegedly tendered his resignation, but Brown did not accept it.²⁶

As planned, the division began crossing after midnight on July 3, 1814. Scott’s 1st Brigade embarked between Black Rock and Buffalo and landed about a mile north of Fort Erie; they would block the evacuation of the fort toward Chippawa. Scott’s men did not avoid detection. A picket identified them and ran to warn the occupants of Fort Erie. Ripley’s men embarked in the mouth of Buffalo Creek and landed about a mile south of Fort Erie. As Scott and Ripley formed their men, the boats returned to carry the rest of their brigades over. Brown arrived about daybreak and ordered Scott to send a battalion to ensure that the garrison at Erie did not attempt to escape. Jesup’s 25th Regiment with engineers moved to reconnoiter the fort’s defenses. Ripley was not initially to be found, so Brown had a staff officer marshal 2nd Brigade. Like his absence at the start of Chrysler’s Farm, Ripley was tardy. This, and his attempt to resign the night previous did not bode well for his future relationship with Brown, but it did not adversely affect his

brigade's performance early on. Ripley eventually gathered his men from the two landing areas and formed them at Snake Hill about a mile south of the fort. As the Left Division surrounded the fort, they brought some 18-pdr guns up to lay siege.

The British commander at Fort Erie was Major Thomas Buck of the 8th Foot. He had at his disposal 137 men of the 100th Foot and three guns no larger than 12-pdr guns. Buck held a council with his officers and determined it was better to surrender than to die in a futile fight.²⁷ While some of the veterans wanted to fight to the death, Buck thought it best to surrender. Brown replaced the garrison with a company of U.S. artillery. Brown's execution had been near flawless with the exception of Ripley's men becoming lost during the night before finding shore early in the morning. Major Buck had been unable to defend the fort, but had dispatched a company of the 19th Light Dragoons to warn Major General Phineas Riall of the American invasion. Riall ordered reinforcements of five companies of Royal Scots from Fort George to Chippawa and directed the 8th Regiment of Foot to sail for Fort George from York immediately. Riall entertained the idea of attacking the American force while it was vulnerable, but decided to wait until the 8th Foot arrived from York.²⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Pearson, one of the victors of Crysler's Farm, set out with the flank companies of the 100th Foot, some Canadian militia, and some of John Norton's native warriors to investigate the size and disposition of the American invasion force. He did not engage directly as he was not certain if another landing force would trap him.²⁹

On July 4, 1814, Scott's brigade took the lead and began to march toward Chippawa. Pearson harassed his movement driving off cattle and horses, and destroying bridges and homes that the Americans could use for transport or cover. Fortunately, for

Scott, most of the creeks on the route were drying out and fordable. For those that were not, Scott's Pioneers were able to rebuild small bridges quickly to facilitate movement. Scott continued to attempt to engage Pearson's men or cut them off. At one point, he sent a company of the 9th Infantry Regiment under Captain Turner Crooker across Street's Creek to cut off a party of Pearson's men that were dragging two guns. The party was able to escape before Crooker reached them, but as they crossed an open area, a small detachment of British dragoons appeared from the wood line and charged. Thinking quickly, Crooker ordered his men into a nearby house that provided cover for them to fire volleys into the charging cavalry. Unable to further attack Crooker's men, the dragoons departed. Scott continued to march toward the Chippawa River. Pearson, in a final attempt to slow him, engaged in a short skirmish just south of the river. Having achieved some success, Pearson's men retired behind the defenses at Chippawa and removed the floorboards of the bridge over the river. Scott probed the river to find it well defended by nine companies of the 2nd Lincoln Militia and Royal Artillery guns. A volley of fire from the guns convinced Scott to withdraw and set up camp. By midnight, Brown and Ripley joined Scott in camp south of Street's Creek. They set pickets out for the night to delay the enemy and provide early warning. As they established camp, it began to rain.³⁰ As night fell, Brown began to plan his attack. He developed a plan to attempt to turn Riall out of position at Chippawa in order to avoid his main defenses. He decided he would attack on July 6, after Porter's Brigade caught up with the main body.³¹

Riall was in a strong position at Chippawa. As situated, the Niagara River protected his eastern flank; the Chippawa River protected his southern flank making a frontal assault or flank from the west very difficult. Any American assault would be

costly. Having decided to wait for the 8th Foot to arrive, he was able to observe events and calculate his moves. He could defend and wait for the Americans to attack, or he could go on the offensive and attack them first. The 8th Foot arrived the morning of July 5 exhausted from their march from York. Riall decided to allow them a few hours of rest before attacking around 4 p.m. Riall had about 2,000 men of infantry, artillery, cavalry, Canadian militia, and native warriors.³² Their artillery consisted of three 6-pdr guns, two 12-pdr. guns, and one 5.5-inch howitzer.

The Americans opposite marched with 3,564 men from three brigades of infantry, four companies of artillery, and 386 native warriors with Red Jacket. Their artillery available consisted of four 6-pdr guns, three 12-pdr guns, three 18-pdr guns, and two 5.5-inch howitzers. During the Battle of Chippawa, only four 6-pdr guns, two howitzers, and one 12-pdr gun came into action on the American side, while only 2,109 total men fought.³³ The Americans set up camp with the Niagara to their flank, Street's Creek to their front, and their guns placed in defensive positions. They placed pickets along most likely avenues of approach to defend against encroaching skirmishers. The camp lay in the middle of a large farming property owned by the family of Samuel Street. The farm had a large area of cleared fields north of Street's Creek that was about 500-700 yards wide and extended from the creek toward Chippawa. There was a large wooded area from the south to southwest flanking one side of the farm and wrapping around to the Chippawa River masking the view from Chippawa to the camp at Street's Creek. The field extended on the opposite flank to the river road and the Niagara River.

As morning dawned, the rain of the previous night stopped as Norton's warriors crept up on the American pickets through the woods. Captain Joseph Henderson's picket

from a company of the 22nd Infantry Regiment began to receive sniper fire. He lost several wounded. At 8 a.m., his replacement, Captain Benjamin Rope's company of the 21st Infantry Regiment, moved the picket to a nearby house to provide better protection from the snipers. Around this same time, another picket under the command of Captain Joseph Treat's company of the 21st Infantry received significant fire from a group of Canadian militia and Norton's men. The picket rose in fear and ran away leaving a wounded man alone. The gunfire attracted Captain Thomas Biddle's attention and he ordered his artillerymen to fire shots into the woods. He then mounted his horse, rode to the fight, and rescued the wounded man before helping Treat regain control of his men. The fighting also drew the attention of General Brown. Finding Treat had left a wounded man behind, he immediately ordered Treat out of the army.³⁴ Brown would not stand for even the appearance of cowardice.

Brown chose not to show his entire force and attack Norton's men at first. He decided to allow them to continue to expend their energies in harassment. As the 8th Foot arrived at Chippawa, Riall decided to join Pearson and Norton to reconnoiter the American positions. Upon return, he decided to attack that afternoon. He had his engineers begin to rebuild the bridge over the Chippawa River and prepared his force for battle. His main force was now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Hay, the Marquis of Tweeddale, who had just arrived the morning of July 5. He was a veteran of Wellington's army.

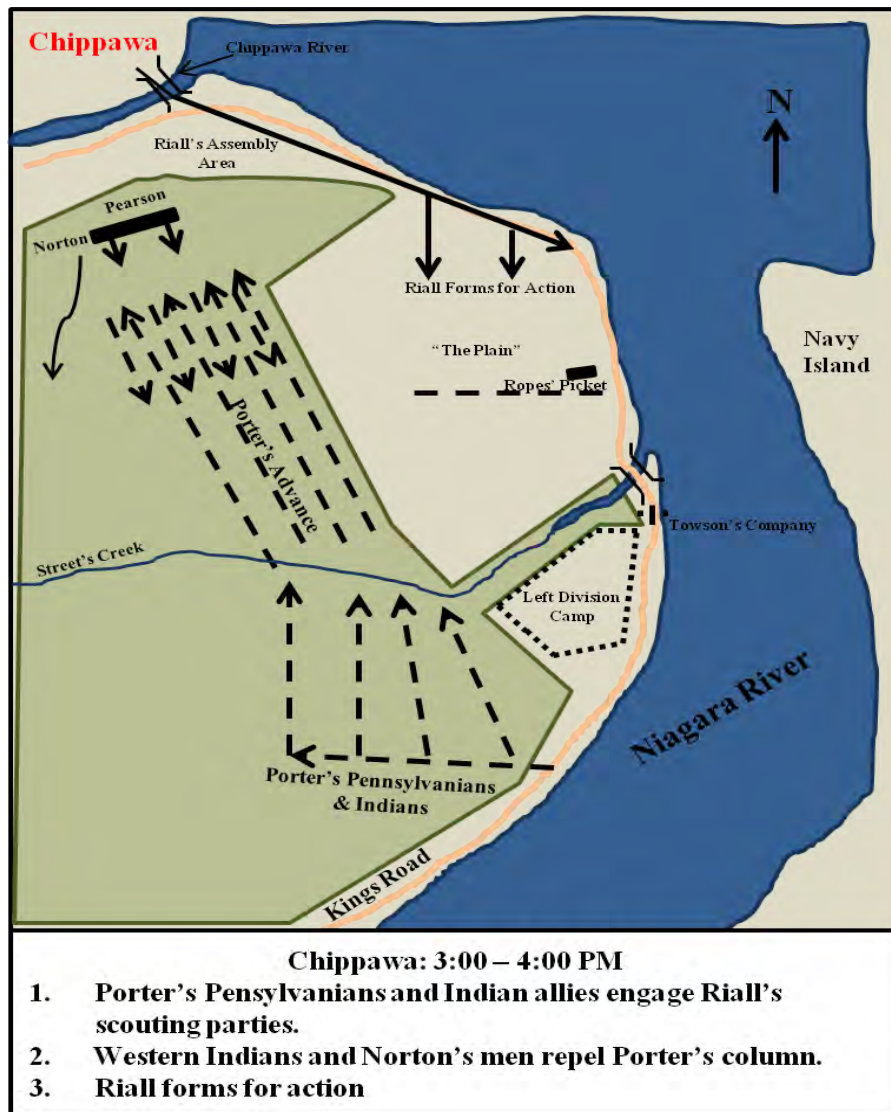


Figure 13. Phase I: Battle of Chippawa

Source: Created by author.

Unaware of the British preparations, Brown decided to have Porter remove the nuisance of Norton's warriors and their Canadian militia. In spite of his brigade's militia nature, the majority chose to cross over, a change from previous years. It was a sign of improved trust in their leaders and the cause for which they were fighting. Porter and his

men arrived at camp around noon. Brown had informed Porter of the harassment and that it was all militia and Indians in the woods while the British regulars remained in Chippawa. Porter's men were exhausted from about 18 miles of marching and were reluctant to go straight to combat. Porter gave them a short break before calling for volunteers to clear the woods around 2 p.m. Porter gathered 200 Pennsylvania militia and 300 natives. As they prepared for combat, the Indians marked their faces with red war paint and white pieces of cloth around their heads to identify their own from the British allied warriors. The Pennsylvanians removed their hats to distinguish themselves from the Canadian militia. Porter was able to gather the men and depart by 3 p.m. Ripley's aide, Lieutenant William McDonald also joined them with 56 regulars from his command. Brown had intended to have Scott's brigade assist as well, but Scott was sleeping, so Brown decided not to bother him.³⁵

As the small force moved through the woods, Porter instructed his men to allow the enemy to fire the first rounds, and while they reloaded, his force would charge them and slaughter as many as they could. These orders were of a clearly asymmetric nature to counter the guerrilla nature of the Indians facing them. It had a fantastic effect causing the enemy to flee. In a few cases, some fought to the death fearing they would receive no quarter. The enemy could not counter Porter's force and they scattered back toward the Chippawa River. As Porter's men drove the enemy back, there was a sudden volley of disciplined fire, followed by the retreat of Porter's native warriors. He and the chiefs under Red Jacket were able to regain control and reform the line.

As Riall's engineers finished rebuilding the bridge at about 3 p.m., he had begun moving his men onto the plain across the river. The 8th and 100th Foot and the 2nd

Lincolns formed with 70 warriors in support.³⁶ Norton moved his 200 fresh warriors into the woods as well. A portion of the Western Indians with the scout parties met Porter's men first. As Porter's column beat them back, Pearson sent the Lincolns and his 70 warriors into the woods to counter them. At first, they had some success against the American allied warriors before the Pennsylvanians and regulars helped them fight the Canadians and British. As the British side began to collapse, Pearson sent three companies of light infantry to assist. Their disciplined volleys gained the attention of Brown while pushing Porter back. The column broke and began to run for camp with Norton's men in chase. As they broke through the woods Captain Samuel Harris' dragoons, who assisted Porter in reforming the men intercepted them.

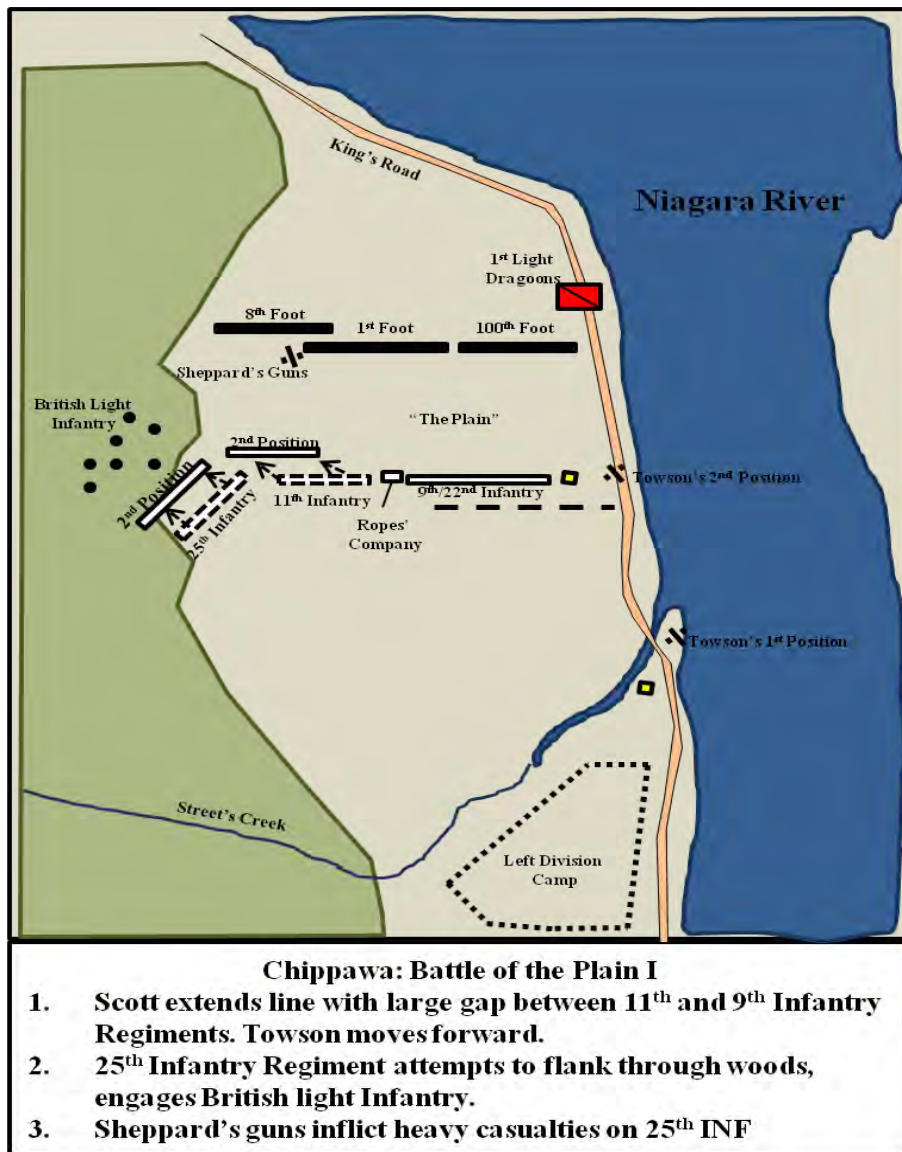


Figure 14. Phase II: Battle of Chippawa

Source: Created by author.

While Brown was at a forward picket with Ropes from the 21st Regiment, he noticed a cloud of dust rising from Chippawa. Riall's formation was marching for battle. He sent Colonel Charles Gardner, his adjutant and chief of staff, to order Scott to form his brigade for battle.³⁷ Scott, ever the disciplinarian, had formed his men to drill, and

was thus ready when called upon. He was not happy to support militia, nor did he yet understand that the British formation was facing him. He marched his brigade of 1,300 men toward Chippawa.³⁸ Brown continued to camp to inform the rest of the Left Division to prepare for battle. His priority was to send artillery to support 1st Brigade, then to send Ripley's 2nd Brigade to skirt the wood line to support Scott's left flank and maneuver behind the British right flank.

Riall continued to position his men for battle as well. After Pearson and Norton had cleared the woods of Americans he sent Lieutenant Richard Armstrong's two 24-pdr. guns and one 5.5-inch howitzer forward. He was followed by the 1st and 100th Foot that lined up to the west or right side of the guns facing south. The 8th Foot picked up a position to the right and slightly behind the 1st and 100th Foot. Lieutenant Edward Sheppard and his three 6-pdr guns accompanied them. The squadron of light dragoons that had escaped from Fort Erie settled in on the river road behind Armstrong's guns. Riall brought about 1,200 regulars onto the plain. They formed in line of two ranks.³⁹ The British were confident that the Americans would break easily as they had the previous two years in similar battles.⁴⁰ As Scott's formation marched into view, the British saw the gray jackets and presumed they would face militia, thus confirming their confidence; however, as they moved from column to line, Riall and his men quickly concluded that they were facing disciplined regulars.⁴¹ Armstrong quickly acquired his target and began to fire. Captain Joseph Henderson of the 22nd Infantry Regiment lost his hat to a round, but maintained his composure and controlled his formation. Captain Thomas Harrison had his leg nearly removed by a cannon shot and refused to be treated until the enemy

had been defeated. The courage and determination of the American officers spurred their men to battle.

Captain Nathan Towson deployed his two 6-pdr. guns and 5.5-inch howitzer south of Street's Creek bridge facing north to counter Armstrong's cannon. The two artillery forces were not more than 400 yards apart making it a very close fight. The short distance created disparity in the guns in that Armstrong's 24-pdr guns were of little more use than the American 6-pdrs. As the 9th and 22nd Infantry Regiments formed in line of two ranks on the right flank near the river road, they began to block Towson's guns forcing him to move them up on line with the 9th. Major Henry Leavenworth commanded a combined 9th and 22nd Infantry Regiments. Both were veteran units. The 9th had experience at Sacket's Harbor and Crysler's Farm.

Commanding the 11th Infantry Regiment, Colonel Thomas Campbell formed his regiment in line on the 22nd Regiment's left flank. Major Thomas Jessup's 25th Regiment began to form in line left of the 11th Regiment. Jessup and his 25th Regiment were also veterans of Sacket's Harbor and Crysler's Farm. The field these units formed on was wider at the south end than at the British north end. This kept the British line tight forcing the 8th Foot to shift off line from the 1st and 100th Foot. Reciprocally, Scott created large gaps between his regiments allowing him a wider front with which to engage the British. He ordered Jessup to take his 25th Regiment toward the wood line in order to protect the flank and, if possible, attack the British right flank in their rear.⁴² Unknown to Scott, due largely to his quick deployment, Brown had ordered Ripley to take his best unit, the 21st Infantry Regiment, into the wood line to attack the British right flank. Porter's warriors had also reengaged in skirmishing in the woods with the British

force harassing Jessup's column. While Scott's Brigade was forming for battle, Towson exchanged fire with Armstrong's guns while the British guns on the west flank targeted the 25th while it remained in column formation moving toward the woods. Towson's guns scored a lucky hit when they struck an ammunition cart. The cart exploded disabling a 24-pdr gun.

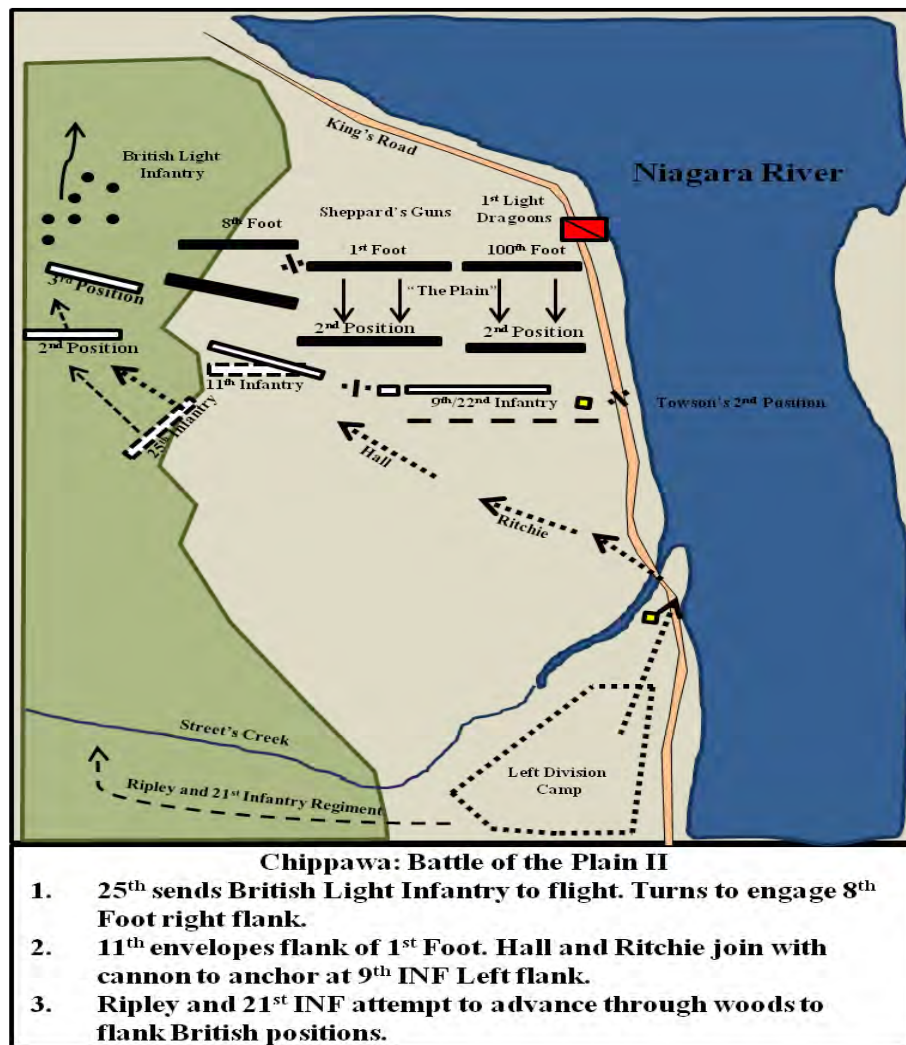


Figure 15. Phase III Battle of Chippawa

Source: Created by author.

In spite of the appreciably disciplined American force in front of him, Riall ordered the 1st and 100th Foot to attack forward and he ordered the 8th Foot to advance to counter Jessup's 25th to the right. The British formula for combat was to march within close range of the American line, exchange two or three volleys, and then charge with bayonets. It had worked in Europe and it worked very well at Crysler's Farm the previous year.⁴³ As the British moved forward, they cut the line of fire of Sheppard's guns forcing him to cease firing. The British were left with one functioning 24-pdr gun and a howitzer at Armstrong's position on the east flank.⁴⁴ As they continued to move forward and the 8th Foot shifted toward Jessup's 25th, Scott noticed that his broad front could nearly wrap around the 1st and 100th Foot. He found Major John McNeil commanding the 11th, as Campbell had been wounded, and ordered him to wheel his left flank around to provide enfilading fire on the enemy. Following this, he rode over to Towson to redirect his guns toward the British infantry. Towson was unable to see the changing conditions due to the smoke created by his guns. Scott returned to the line of infantry and prepared them to engage the British. When they were about 150 yards from the enemy, he ordered them to fire.⁴⁵ Towson's guns tore into the line of the 100th Foot while McNeil's 11th inflicted heavy casualties on the flank of the 1st Foot. The British line steadied, replacing the dead and wounded before the line fired on the Americans. The British were able to create casualties for Scott's 1st Brigade, but they were not as effective as Towson's guns and McNeil's 11th.

Meanwhile, back at camp, Ripley's 2nd Brigade was standing ready to fight. His 21st Regiment struggled to cross a chest-high creek into the woods. Porter had rallied his troops and prepared them to reenter the fight as well. Major Jacob Hindman, the division

artillery commander requested to join the fight, but Brown wanted to preserve his combat power. He eventually allowed Captain John Ritchie and Captain Thomas Biddle to cross with two 6-pdr guns, a 12-pdr gun, and another 5.5-inch howitzer in support of 1st Brigade. After setting conditions at camp, Brown returned to the battlefield where he found Jessup working through his complex situation near the wood line.⁴⁶ Jessup's men put the light infantry companies in the woods to flight, sending a company with Captain Daniel Ketchum to continue the pursuit while the remainder of the regiment dealt with the advancing 8th Foot. Jessup's men advanced with success against the 8th pushing them back north. He turned his regiment again and assisted Ketchum in putting the light infantry to a final flight back toward Chippawa. They were unable to destroy the 8th Foot, but had kept them from reinforcing the 1st and 100th Foot whom the Americans continued to batter. The Americans, known for their marksmanship, targeted the British officers inflicting disproportionately higher casualties than their own officers suffered. The American fire was so steady and effective that the British were unable to advance. Scott's tactics had disrupted their formula for success. Unwilling to retreat or advance, the British continued to fire and receive fire. Adding insult to injury, Ritchie and Lieutenant James Hall's artillery pieces crossed over and took their place between the 9th and 22nd Regiments. The effect was tragic for the British and Riall withdrew his force. His dragoons and the 8th Foot covered the withdrawal.

The beaten professionals were quick and methodical, nearly leaving their natives to the Americans. Captain Samuel D. Harris's dragoons attempted to take advantage of the withdrawal, but the guns of the 8th Foot and those at Chippawa kept him at a distance.⁴⁷ Scott ordered an advance, hoping to finish the British. The British guns

defending the north shore of the Chippawa River greeted him. Porter's Brigade and Hindman's artillery joined him for an exchange of artillery fire. Ripley's Brigade also joined the rest of the division as Brown prepared to assault the British. Unfortunately, the reconnaissance of the British positions brought the end of the day and Brown ordered his division back to camp. It was about 6:30 p.m. Three hours of combat ended.⁴⁸

The Battle of Chippawa was the first of the campaign, and a testament to the improved condition of the American fighting force. The battle preceded the burning of Washington D.C., the Battle of Lundy's Lane, and of Baltimore. 1814 was a very challenging year for the American army. At Chippawa, over 700 men were wounded or killed. The Americans spent the next two days collecting the wounded, sending them to Buffalo, and burying the dead. Brown followed the battle by planning for the capture of Chippawa. Riall eventually departed as Brown executed his turning movement against Chippawa, sending his men to Fort George and Burlington Heights. The campaign continued with the Battle of Lundy's Lane, July 25, where Brown and Scott were injured. The British followed Lundy's Lane with the Siege of Fort Erie among other short engagements along the Niagara. The Americans continued to perform well, however attrition, as it often does, wore down the Left Division. A combination of lacking resources and lack of support from Chauncey and Izard led to an anticlimactic season.

Following the burning of Washington, Madison relieved Armstrong replacing him with James Monroe. Like Armstrong, Monroe fixated on Niagara and continued to order Izard to support Brown's Left Division rather than marching on Montreal. Unable to draw Lieutenant General Drummond into battle as they had Riall, Brown and Izard returned to winter quarters. At the end of the season, the U.S. possessed very little

Canadian territory, but they regained their honor, and gave the British a bloody nose.

American armies had finally stood toe to toe with the world's best army and had given as much, if not more, than they received. Armstrong and Madison failed to keep their focus on their strategic goals of seizing Kingston and Montreal. They failed to apply national resources toward that end. Fortunately, under the leadership of Jacob Brown, Winfield Scott, and others, the American soldier put them in a position to persuade the British to agree to peace and return all previous territorial integrity to the United States at the end of the war.

The army of the Left Division was a model of improvement in the U.S. Army as a whole. It showed that under good, experienced leadership and uniform training and discipline, the American soldier was capable of fighting and winning against any enemy. Armstrong, for all of his meddling, had replaced the poor leadership of 1813 with proven combat leaders. Brown, unlike Wilkinson before him, was always present during the battle, moving between the battlefield and camp providing needed support and contingency preparation throughout. Scott similarly controlled his part of the fight, ensuring the maximum efficiency from his artillery support, and seizing opportunities to take advantage of enemy positioning. At the regimental and company levels, leaders like Captains Harrison and Henderson displayed courage under fire, motivating their men to victory. These leaders provided training and unit discipline to their men at all levels throughout the spring of 1814 preparing them for the success they later enjoyed.

The Left Division's actions during 1814, and specifically at Chippawa, were a direct reflection of their leadership and training. Counter to the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812 and Crysler's Farm in 1813, the men exhibited no fear, they did not

retreat except to reform, and the militia voluntarily crossed to fight in significantly greater numbers than those who chose not to cross. The division did not fight weak militias and regulars. The British men and leaders they faced in 1814 were increasingly the same veterans that defeated Napoleon in Europe. Men such as Lieutenant Colonel George Hay, the Marquis of Tweeddale, at Chippawa, continued to fill the British ranks throughout the 1814 campaign.

Tactically, the Left Division showed a much better understanding of how to best deploy for battle, cross the river, and establish conditions for victory. Additionally, Brown and Scott exhibited an ability to apply effectively all of their elements of combat power, synchronized to mass effects on the enemy. Both Brown and Scott were adept at patiently analyzing the situation and building combat power as they did at Fort Erie to gain a victory without losing any dead. Brown displayed the better part of the old maxim, march divided and fight combined, when he planned a good river crossing, massing his forces at two landing points outside contact with the enemy, before marching toward Fort Erie together. They ensured that they brought their artillery to bear prior to any assault of the fort, counter to Boyd's failure of synchronization at Crysler's Farm. The only missing element was Brown's inability to influence Chauncey to seize the initiative on Lake Ontario in order to support his campaign. Fort Erie allowed Brown the opportunity not only to mass combat power prior to marching north, but it also provided additional practice for Brown in maneuvering his division for combat.

The Battle of Chippawa, as shown, modeled the lessons learned and the evolution of training and leadership in the American Army. The new leadership applied those lessons learned from embarrassing failures to prepare their troops for battle and seize

victory. Their tactical decisions during the battle showed their ability to adjust and fix the things that others executed poorly in the past. The new American Army established a legacy of excellence in leadership and tactics that generations forward would emulate and improve.

¹ Richard Barbuto, *The Canadian Theater 1814* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2014), 7.

² Ibid.

³ Jacob Brown letter to the Secretary of War, dated July 7, 1814, in H. A. Fay, *Collection of the Official Accounts, in Detail, of all the Battles Fought by Sea and Land, Between the Navy and Army of the United States, and the Navy and Army of Great Britain, During the Years 1812, 13, 14, and 15* (New York: Printed by E. Conrad, 1817), 212.

⁴ Barbuto, *Canadian Theater*, 8.

⁵ Donald Graves, *And All Their Glory Past: Fort Erie, Plattsburgh and the Final Battles in the North, 1814* (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 2013), 2-3.

⁶ John Armstrong, *Notices of The War of 1812 Vol II* (New-York: George Dearborn Publisher 1840), 217.

⁷ Barbuto, *Canadian Theater*, 9.

⁸ Donald Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets: The Battle of Chippawa, 5 July 1814* (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 1994), 8.

⁹ Barbuto, *Canadian Theater*, 8-9.

¹⁰ Samuel R. Brown, *An Authentic History of the Second War for Independence Comprising Details of the Military and Naval Operations, From the Commencement to the Close of the Recent War; Enriched with Numerous Geographical and Biographical Notes* (Auburn: J. G. Hathaway Publisher, 1815), 129.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, 20.

¹³ Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, 20; Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 116, 121.

¹⁴ Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, 19.

- ¹⁵ Ibid., 20.
- ¹⁶ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 124.
- ¹⁷ Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, 20; Brown, *An Authentic History*, 135.
- ¹⁸ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 125-126.
- ¹⁹ Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, 20.
- ²⁰ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 130-131.
- ²¹ Barbuto, *Canadian Theater*, 14.
- ²² Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 163.
- ²³ Armstrong, *Notices*, 82-83.
- ²⁴ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 150.
- ²⁵ Armstrong, *Notices*, 83.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 219.
- ²⁷ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 166.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 166.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 167.
- ³¹ Ibid., 168.
- ³² Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, (ebook), 141.
- ³³ Ibid., 138.
- ³⁴ Armstrong, *Notices*, Brown's removal of Treat, quoted in Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, (ebook), 75.
- ³⁵ Graves, *Red Coats and Grey Jackets*, (ebook), 84.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 85.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 88.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 90.

³⁹ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁴¹ Ibid., 93.

⁴² Ibid., 93-94.

⁴³ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 100-101.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 110-112.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 112-113.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The campaign season of 1814 ended in a disappointing manner that reflected a continued weakness in the American government to commit fully to prosecuting the war. Madison's inability to apply all of his national resources to obtaining political and military objectives resulted in two moderately sized armies under Izard and Brown stalling and incapable of seizing Canada and ejecting Great Britain from North America. In spite of the situation, the leaders maintained the same stated strategic military objectives throughout the war regardless of any serious attempt to reach those goals. Through the war, they learned much nationally and militarily with regard to conducting warfare as a democratic nation. The U.S. Army and the Madison Administration recognized the need to improve at the end of each campaigning year. They focused on three main areas each season; logistics, training, and leadership; and ultimately found the solution in their young leaders.

The War Department struggled with the efficient use of logistics while raising an army during the first year of the war. In Ohio, the Army had to cut new roads in order to reach their forces with supplies coming from central and southern Ohio, as well as from Pennsylvania. In New York, supplies travelled for days from locations near Albany.¹ The Army's supply system underwent continuous changes throughout the war, never fixing the problem, but improving slightly.

Training was another recurring struggle for the War Department. Training manuals of discipline received political attention and therefore changed yearly as a reflection of the lack of combat results and changing leadership. The generals tended to

prefer Von Steuben in the regular army while the militia varied from Von Steuben to William Duane. It was not until Brigadier General Winfield Scott had his chance in the spring of 1814, that an entire invading force received universal training.

One cannot understate the role of leadership in all things tactical with regard to logistics, training, and combat in this war. From William Eustis to John Armstrong, and James Monroe in intervals, the Secretary of War fought a continuous struggle to appease the political powers while emplacing competent leaders in the force. The pool they selected from varied as the war progressed, but incompetence was the leading force in stalling the war effort. Experience, aggressive leadership style, and desire for victory were traits sorely lacking in 1812. The Madison Administration recognized the need to improve the leaders each year, but only after 1813 did they select experience and skill over political consideration.

The War of 1812 provided an opportunity to build experience for the U.S. Army and its government in the realms of logistics, training, and leadership. With each new campaign season, changes in the force and leadership reflected the lessons learned the previous year. As with the U.S. Army today, the force was willing to reflect and make changes. Also similar to today's Army, those changes were incremental and cautious as the old guard tended to avoid creating large waves.

As the Treasury Department released control of purchasing to the War Department in 1812, William Eustis and the Madison Administration developed a system of procurement and delivery between the Commissary General of Purchasing and the Quartermaster General. The system conceptually was not very different from what the Continental Army used during the American Revolution.² The system allocated a process

to purchase the equipment, clothing, and housing for the army in addition to using contractors to supply food and augment the Quartermaster Department as well. The problems in the system, especially in 1812, were that the leaders had no experience managing a supply system, the industrial base existed only in the manufacture of weapons, and the critical infrastructure did not exist. In Ohio, General Hull and General Harrison each had to build roads to support their supply lines. General Hull feared the loss of his supplies so much that he capitulated against a smaller British force without a fight at Detroit. Stephen Van Rensselaer struggled throughout early 1812, only receiving minimal supplies by October when he invaded Upper Canada under pressure from his men and senior leaders in the administration. His shortage included the acquisition of only 13 boats with which to cross his army over to the Canadian side. These issues may have contributed to his poor selection of landing spots, being unable to ensure resupply from any great distance.

In 1813, John Armstrong ascended to the post of Secretary of War. He very quickly implemented changes in the logistical system and the division of military responsibilities. Armstrong established nine military districts and with it nine logistical districts that nearly coincided with the commands. His system intended to improve the confusion and ineptitude of the previous year's concept. He created deputies for each district that spread the work out among several leaders.³ He also attempted to fix issues in contracting that had allowed contractors to pocket the money and sub-contract cheap labor to produce a cheaper product.⁴ The system provided more oversight, which helped to improve the process during the campaign season of 1813. Major General James Wilkinson was able to procure significant resources for his intended campaign to

Montreal through the efforts of Brigadier Generals Jacob Brown and Robert Swartout. The system still lacked leadership that it received only through the efforts of commanders on the ground like Scott and Brown.

By 1814, the system in place the previous year began to function with some mild improvement. General Andrew Jackson had continued problems in the south, and General Winfield Scott had his problems, especially in receiving uniforms, but the system showed signs of potential. Had the war continued a few more years, Congress was poised to increase further the capabilities of the War Department to supply its army in the field.⁵

The real improvement to logistics during the war of 1812 came from its combat leaders. As we see in today's armies, logistics is often an afterthought in planning for war. As a modern example, when African armies prepared for the 2013 invasion of Mali to defeat Muslim extremists, they realized they had no logistics capabilities. Much like the American Army in 1812, they lacked the institutions, infrastructure, and basic units to execute logistical efforts. Leaders like Van Rensselaer, Wilkinson, and Brown struggled constantly to use their system effectively. Brown's determination in 1813 and again in 1814, with Swartout and Scott, was the difference in providing those armies with the supplies that Van Rensselaer was unable to achieve due to political difference with Porter as well as his lack of organizational leadership talent. Van Rensselaer was unable to reach across boundaries and political gaps to create a common vision of success. The difference was stark in willingness and determination of the men in Van Rensselaer and Brown's armies. Brown's army of 1814 had only 200 militia refuse to cross into Canada. Van Rensselaer, by contrast, had at least half of his militia force refuse to fight while many crossed only to hide on shore with a mild hope of escape. An army without

supplies, in difficult terrain, and with poor leadership has no faith in victory. Brown went to great lengths to protect his supply depots at Sacket's Harbor and Oswego Falls during 1813 and 1814. The Administration recognized the lack of a functioning logistical system in 1812. They improved on the system in 1813, and in 1814, as they did with other aspects of the war; the Administration finally recognized and changed the leaders involved in the system.

Should an American army succeed in supplying itself, it next required a capacity to fight a professional British force combined with a determined Canadian militia. Training manuals were politically charged products chosen by the Secretary of War. During the course of the war, America's leaders realized they needed effective doctrine in order to succeed. The conversation started during the first decade of the 1800s with regard to changing to a French system, and the Madison Administration continued to search for the right answer throughout much of the war. The generals prosecuting the war sought to implement their preferred manuals in spite of decisions at the War Department. As the U.S. entered the war, they had decided to issue Alexander Smyth's book, *Regulations for the Field Exercise, Manoeuvres, and Conduct of the Infantry of the United States*, which was based on the French manual of arms, but condensed to an abbreviated form. It focused on drill and parade-like movements, but did not discuss tactical requirements such as amphibious operations, establishing a defense, or conducting the attack. By contrast, the preferred manual among the Revolutionary era generals, Baron Von Steuben's "Blue Book", gave details on establishing a camp, how to transition to the attack from the march, how to cross obstacles, such as a river; and how to pass formations in order to screen with light infantry during the assault. Many militias

continued the use of Von Steuben, while the regulars varied between Von Steuben and Smyth.

In 1813, Armstrong ordered the use of William Duane's, *A Hand Book for Infantry*, for both the militia and regular army. The militia in New York had chosen to use Duane's manual as it was simple and described the French system for use by Americans. It went into much more detail than Smyth's book, but the generals still preferred Von Steuben and Smyth. When Wilkinson arrived at Sacket's Harbor in October 1813, he ordered his subordinates to train the entire force with Duane's manual. This effort was too little too late, as his force had trained all summer separately and by October had to begin movement along the St Lawrence or chance missing the entire fighting season. As a result, the units did not know how to fight combined at the brigade and higher levels, many having learned differing commands for movements.

It was not until 1814, after much experience at failure, that the generals implemented universal training at the division level. What is interesting is that Scott did not use only one manual. He largely drew from the French tactics, augmented with Steuben and Smyth's manuals.⁶ As a student of military art and science, Scott implemented broad study amongst his junior leaders to ensure understanding. The Left Division studied doctrinal discipline on the drill field and in camp. In addition to the increased emphasis on drill and discipline by a general with experience in each campaign of the war, the men under his command had become experienced veterans.⁷ There were thousands of new recruits in 1814, but the veterans combined with Scott's emphasis on mock battles and squad to brigade movements created a disciplined force prepared to meet the British. The improvements reflect a continued pattern of recognition of lessons

learned through experience on the part of Jacob Brown, Winfield Scott, and even John Armstrong to some extent.

The U.S. Army's leaders played the most important role in the success and failure of the army in 1812-1814 in the same manner that leaders have throughout history. This basic premise was the most over-looked issue in the early years of the war. The Administration believed that good discipline and will of the American soldier was enough to seize Quebec and remove the British from North America.⁸ They soon learned that politics and Revolutionary experience alone would not propel their force to victory. The first year was marked by little experience and mainly politics. The second year saw in its leaders some experience in the Revolution and largely Republican politics. Finally, in 1814, as if finally giving in, the Administration chose experienced, young, and aggressive leaders to campaign for them. This decision reflects a slow learning process or reluctant willingness to accept that politicians were too cautious and undependable.

In 1812, Madison selected Stephen Van Rensselaer on the advice of New York Governor Daniel Tompkins to lead their invasion at Niagara for political reasons. Van Rensselaer was a Federalist gubernatorial contender to the New York Republican governor and as importantly a key figure that could rally Federalist support in anti-war New England. Following his failure due to his political infighting with Peter Porter and Alexander Smyth, logistical shortfalls, and militia issues, the Administration realized that politics could not replace experience in leading men to fight. The resulting selection of James Wilkinson and his army opponent, Wade Hampton, almost makes sense due to their military experience over the past thirty years and political placement among Federalists and Republicans. As explained in chapter three, this setup also failed. Neither

of the men were effective martial leaders, and both were too timid and unwilling to aggressively attack the enemy.

It was not until 1814 that Armstrong and Madison appear to have learned their lesson. They selected Jacob Brown, George Izard, Edmund Gaines, Winfield Scott, and Eleazar Ripley to lead their army based almost entirely on their martial experience and competence. While some, like Ripley, had political leanings, they stood out most for their willingness to fight and ability to train and prepare their units.

The Madison Administration and their generals improved throughout the course of the War of 1812 in the three areas of logistics, tactics and training, and leadership. Just as we see in today's army, it was a very slow process, often recognized in the writing of the generals involved. It was a challenge to integrate the changes year to year due to the democratic requirement to balance political pressures with combat needs. As demonstrated by the three battles of Queenston Heights, Crysler's Farm, and Chippawa, the U.S. Army did evolve over the course of the war. At Queenston Heights, one sees the failure of leaders due to a lack of experience in the selection of river crossing methods and supplying the force. Van Rensselaer's lack of experience resulted in his inability as an organizational leader to provide for his men, or inspire them to fight. In the preparation for Crysler's Farm, logistical supply received a greater focus, as did training method and tactical requirements, while the Administration continued to choose leaders by political appointment with only nominal martial experience. Wilkinson and Hampton's lack of tangible experience leading in combat resulted in fatal flaws in execution and poor management of combat power. Finally, at Chippawa, one saw the convergence of improved logistical insight, better training, and great execution of tactics

and combined arms at the hands of competent leaders that understood both the science and art of leadership. The key lesson one must learn from this early American experience is the need for martial institutions to accept change during combat and to seek innovation between engagements. The institution must seek the preparation of leaders by education and experience prior to conflict. Leaders must receive instruction with a focus on doctrine as well as the efficient use of logistics during wartime. The American soldier proved in 1812-1814, as they do today, that they would fight valiantly and give their lives freely for good leaders who recognize failure and implement change as they march to victory.

¹ Steve R. Waddell, *United States Army Logistics from the American Revolution to 9/11* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 27.

² Ibid., 34-35.

³ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴ Ibid., 30, 32.

⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁶ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 125; Samuel R. Brown. *An Authentic History of the Second War for Independence Comprising Details of the Military and Naval Operations, From the Commencement to the Close of the Recent War; Enriched with Numerous Geographical and Biographical Notes* (Auburn: J.G. Hathaway Publisher, 1815), 135.

⁷ Barbuto, *Niagara 1814*, 126-133.

⁸ William J, Bennett, *America The Last Best Hope, Volume I: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War* (New York: Nelson Current, 2006), 199.

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