

## **AMERICAN INVASIONS OF CANADA**

**From attacks on Quebec (Canada) by the British-American colonies in the 1600's to the Fenian Invasions from the United States on Canada in 1866-1871**

**Canadian P.M. Mark Carney says Canada is “not for sale” after U.S. President Donald Trump intends Canada to be the 51st U.S. state in an Oval Office meeting —“not now, not ever.”**



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**U.S. President Donald Trump announced his intention for the United States to make Canada the 51st U.S. state. Although he said the take-over would be only through economic pressure, his reputation for using force and dissimulation alerted Canadians to the possibility of an armed invasion. Canada has faced several invasions from the United States as listed in brief accounts below.**

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**American invasions of Canada had connections to wars in Europe, particularly between the English and French. The four French and Indian wars beginning with King William's War and ending with the French and Indian War cast the French Quebec against the English colonies in disputes over lands in the west and ultimately over control of North America. We take notice of them here as forerunners of invasions of Canada by the United States.**

**King William's War, (1689–97), the North American extension of the War of the Grand Alliance, waged by William III of Great Britain and the League of Augsburg against France under Louis XIV. Canadians with their Huron allies fought against New England colonists and the Iroquois.**

**Queen Anne's War, (1702–13), fought between Great Britain and France in North America for control of the continent, was contemporaneous with the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe. While French forces and their Indian allies raided English settlements, the British captured the French fortress of Port Royal in 1710, changing the French-ruled Acadia into the British province of Nova Scotia. Later Britain acquired Newfoundland and the Hudson Bay region from France. under the terms of the Treaties of Utrecht (1713).**

**King George's War, (1744–48), American phase of the War of the Austrian Succession, between France and Great Britain for mastery of the North American continent, characterized by bloody border raids by both sides with the aid of their Indian allies. The only important victory was the New Englanders' capture of Louisbourg, Cape Breton Island, on June 15, 1745.**

Hereafter we define the attacks on Canada from the American colonies as the acts of Americans intent on capturing Canada.

The French and Indian War, an American phase of a worldwide nine years' war (1754–63) fought between France and Great Britain to determine control of the vast colonial territory of North America (the European phase was the Seven Years' War [1756–63] fought in Europe.) Was the upper Ohio River valley a part of the British Empire, open for trade and settlement by Virginians and Pennsylvanians, or part of the French Empire? The French gradually expanded into the Great Lakes region, establishing a permanent settlement at Detroit and killed every English-speaking trader that the French and their Indian allies could find in the upper Ohio Valley.

Virginia claimed the lands were included in the colony's 1609 charter, but its militia, unable to vanquish seasoned French regulars, called on British colonies across the continent, which provided great quantities of food for provisioning armies in the field, whereas the inhabitants of French Canada faced almost famine conditions when the blockades off the coast of France and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence made it virtually impossible to import food.

Both British regulars and the American colonial forces became seasoned wilderness fighters. The most-notable Anglo-American unit to adopt that style of combat was Rogers' Rangers, a corps of some 600 frontiersmen under commander Robert Rogers. Kenneth Roberts' powerful novel *Northwest Passage* relates the Rangers raids on French settlements by way of Lake Champlain beginning with St. Francis, and along the Great Lakes conquering French forts to Fort Detroit. He is regarded as an American hero by Americans interested in history but when he returned from adventures in Europe at the start of the American War for Independence, Rogers joined his brother James' regiment of Loyalist militia, a true British patriot.

**Roberts' narrator wrote about Rogers:** "To me, at times, he seemed almost a god: at other times possessed by demons. Yet I think that at his best he benefited his country more substantially than have warriors, statesmen and authors of greater renown; and at his worst, I suspect he fell no lower than any one of us might fall, provided we had possessed his vision and energy to begin with, and then had undergone the same exertions, the same temptations, the same ingritudes and disappointments he endured. Therefore it has seemed to me worthwhile to write my recollections of the days when he fascinated me as no man has before or since."

### **THE AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE (THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION) 1775—1783**

**The American War of Independence set the American rebel colonies against French-Canadian and British forces defending Canada. Officially the colonies were British but rebelled against Great Britain with an army under General Washington which fought British armies sent from England. It was also a civil war between American Loyalists and American rebels: the number of rebel militias equalled Loyalist militias fighting throughout the colonies. Many colonial government officials and perhaps half the population refused to rebel.**

**Early in the fighting, two expeditions of Americans were sent to capture Quebec which had refused to join the Americans in the rebellion against their British rulers. One prong of the attack led by General Montgomery went by way of Lake Champlain to attack Montreal while the other led by Benedict Arnold took a more arduous route through the Maine wilderness to attack Quebec City. Kenneth Roberts described the harrowing passage of Arnold's troops through Maine to besiege Quebec. Arnold is wounded and cannot join in the battle for the Lower Town which the Canadians win. Meanwhile Montgomery's troops have taken Montreal. Continuing to Quebec to help Arnold's force besiege it, they fail to conquer it and retreat with Arnold's troops in a snowstorm. A passage from Kenneth Roberts' novel *Arundel; a Chronicle of The Province of Maine and The Secret Expedition Against***

**Quebec will give the reader a sense of the Maine wilderness the expedition must overcome:**

Of all the rivers I know, it seems to me the Chaudière is best named. Dead River is painfully alive for most of its length; the Sandy River hasn't enough sand, in some parts, to polish a shilling; and although Cobosseecontee means "where the sturgeon is found," there are no sturgeons in the Cobosseecontee River except at its mouth in the spring of the year. But the word "chaudière" means "caldron" in the French tongue; and the River Chaudière is a boiling, hissing caldron of water for its entire length, its bed made up of jagged rocks and ledges, with here and there a sudden roaring cataract set among rock-walled turns so sharp that the water, whirling in them, seems to smoke. In other rapid rivers there may be white patches of quick water, followed by stretches of smooth; so that a canoe, driven by skillful paddlers, reaches for one goal of dark water after another, giving the paddlers time to think, and so come through safely. In the Chaudière the water runs white for miles, all curling waves and foam from bank to bank, with spines of rock rising above the smother like the backs of salmon in the quick water of a tide river in early spring, as they go up to lay their eggs and die.

Thus paddlers shoot for miles through this furious water, and in the end become numb to the whiteness and the danger. Their alertness relaxes, their canoe is slashed to the vitals by the sawlike teeth of a ledge or toppled headlong down an avalanche of foam, and it is a miracle if they, as well as all their belongings, are not boiled by the Chaudière into a pulp.

**The fighting between Indian nations, Loyalist militias and Rebel forces was often random as this passage from *From Bloody Beginnings; Richard Beasley's Upper Canada* illustrates:**

At Fort Niagara, Colonel Bolton, hearing rumours of rebel attacks on the western posts, sent out parties in all directions to find out what was happening. He sent John Butler, not fully recovered from the Wyoming campaign, with a small force of Rangers and Indians to Kanadasaga on Lake Seneca to counsel with the worried Indians. The hunting and fishing were bad. They lived off roots and greens found in the forest and, starving, had to drift down to the Genesee River where the fish were

plentiful. Joseph Brant with his war party and Walter Butler with some Rangers joined Colonel Butler and fanned out looking for cattle to drive away and eat.

Joseph's party went far down the Delaware River to the first prosperous settlement they could find. After burning the homes and driving cattle out of the woods with some difficulty, Brant's warriors, out of respect for him, spared women and children. Joseph put his red mark on the young girls, who then sat beside their brothers and spread their aprons and skirts with the mark over their knees. Warriors, seeing the mark, waved and passed by. A lame schoolteacher went to meet the advancing Indians to give his students time to flee. "Brother!" he cried, stretching out his arm in peace, but the Indians cut him down.

The rebel militia caught up to Brant's party two days later as it forded the river with its plunder. Well-disciplined and eager to avenge themselves, some militiamen veered to get in front of Brant's smaller force, but Brant, hearing gunfire, led forty of his men through the underbrush to get in front of these militia to ambush the ambushers. Surprised, cut off from their main body, the rebels refused Brant's offer to surrender. Fighting Indian style behind rocks and trees, each man for himself, Brant's white Volunteers and Indians took all day to subdue the militia in what was later called one of the bloodiest contests of the revolution. They tomahawked the wounded, pleading for their lives, as the most merciful treatment to save them from being mangled by wolves in the night. A rebel captain, about to be tomahawked, gave the master mason's sign of distress, and Joseph, pushing aside the warrior, grasped the captain's hand in a mason's grip, saving his life. Joseph gave the captain his blanket to sleep in by the fire, and the next morning broached the subject of freemasonry.

## **THE WAR OF 1812 (1812-1814)**

**This was the first American invasion of Canada in which American armies tried to conquer Canada from the farthest extent of the Great Lakes to Quebec. Canadian militia, British regulars and Indian nations from the West and East repulsed the American invaders after suffering destruction of towns, mills and ships. While the British fought the French over the West Indies and Napoleon's armies in Europe,**

American President Madison saw an opportunity to capture Upper Canada to cut off the timber sent from it to England which used it to build its ships. Without timber the British navy would be weakened, giving American ships greater command of the seas.

Major John Richardson, Canada's first novelist, wrote the first narrative of the war. His *A Canadian Campaign* was serialized in a British periodical in 1826-27. It describes the fighting on the Right Division of the Army of Upper Canada about Detroit and south through Ohio and Pennsylvania. Richardson joined the 41st British Regiment at age 15 as a Gentleman Volunteer, was promoted to Lieutenant after proving himself in battles, and was taken prisoner to Kentucky after his regiment and Tecumseh's Indians were overwhelmed in the Battle of the Thames (1814).

The war comprised three battle regions: The Right Division in the West, the Centre Division in the Niagara area, and the Left Division in eastern Canada. Richardson, after spending 23 years in Europe and returning to Canada, gathered documentation on the battles in the other regions but when the Reform government withdrew its grant to him to pay for their publication, he added documentation on the Right Division to his *A Canadian Campaign* and published it as *The War of 1812* in 1842. *The Canadian Campaign* was reprinted by Davus Publishing in 2011 with an introduction by David Beasley and reprinted with other writings in *Operations of the Army Under General Wolfe: The Battle for Quebec* in 2023. (David Beasley's biography of Major Richardson, *The Canadian Don Quixote; the Life and Works of Major John Richardson, Canada's First Novelist* is available from Davus Publishing.)

Richardson claimed that Canada would have been lost to the Americans in the first year of the war if it were not for the Indigenous nations in the west that Tecumseh persuaded to join the British to fight the American armies beginning with Fort Detroit. From fear of the fierce tribes and their potential massacre of the fort's inhabitants the American General Hull surrendered without a fight

An excerpt from *A Canadian Campaign* explains in part Richardson's reasoning for writing it.

Much has been said and written in respect to the American Indians; but I do not recollect having ever met with a detail sufficiently accurate to convey a just idea of the character of these people. As they will occupy a tolerable portion of my attention, and frequently appear under circumstances which might incline the reader to incredulity, I will merely observe, that no one incident will be found committed to these pages, which may not be attested by every officer who served with the right division of the Canadian army. In fact, to that division alone were the more savage of the Indian race attached; and when it is considered, that among the warriors of at least twenty different tribes, there were those who had scarcely ever any previous intercourse with whites, and had seldom approached a fortified place but in open hostility, the savageness of their natures will cease to excite surprise. As it is my intention to give a faithful account of the various cruelties committed during our struggle in Canada—cruelties we had not power to prevent, since perpetrated by an ally over whom we had no control—it may not be improper to advert to the motives for their employment. The Americans have invariably been loud in their condemnation of a measure which alone secured to us the possession of Upper Canada: with how little reason, however, will appear from the well-known fact, that every possible exertion was used, by the agents of their Government, to detach the Indians from our cause. Embracing the system adopted and followed by England for years, presents of all descriptions were issued to the warriors; while, in the council, the most flattering promises were made, the most seducing offers held forth, to induce them to make common cause with the invader. The wary chieftains, however, were not to be tempted by professions of friendship from those whose perfidy had long been proverbial with the Indian race. The bounties of England had been heaped on them with no sparing hand—the faith of the Government had never been violated—no spirit of interest or dominion had chased them from the homes of their forefathers—the calumet of peace had never once been dashed from the lips of those they were called on to abandon; and they remained true to the faith they had pledged, staunch to the cause in which they had embarked. The natives must have been our friends or our foes: had we not employed them the Americans would; and although humanity may deplore the necessity imposed by the very invader himself, of counting them among our allies, and combatting at their side,

—the law of self-preservation was our guide, and scrupulous indeed must be the power that would have hesitated at such a moment in its choice. The act of aggression was not ours—we declared no war against America—we levied no armies to invade her soil, and carry desolation wherever they came:—but we availed ourselves of that right, common to every weak power—the right of repelling acts of aggression by every means within our reach. Yet though it is admitted that the Indians, while our allies, were in some instances guilty of those atrocities peculiar to every savage people; let it not be supposed, as has been falsely and maliciously stated in a work from the pen of an “Englishwoman,” that these atrocities were sanctioned either by the Government or by individuals. On the contrary, every possible mean was tried by the officer commanding at Amherstburg, and Colonel Elliott, superintendent of Indian affairs for that post, to soften down the warlike habits of the natives. The most likely method of preventing the unnecessary effusion of blood was that of offering rewards for prisoners. This, however, except in a very few instances, was found to be ineffectual; for the character and disposition of the savage were not to be tamed by rewards, nor the impression of ages to be removed by such temptations. To have employed force, would have been to have turned their weapons against ourselves; and a body of eight hundred troops, composing the utmost strength of the garrison, could have effected little against three thousand fiery warriors, unused to restraint, and acknowledging no power but their own lawless and unbridled will. The Americans themselves had Indians employed in their service—a few only it is true—but if they had not more, it was not owing to any want of exertion on their parts; and if it is admitted on one hand, that they conducted themselves with more humanity, it cannot at the same time be denied on the other, that the feebleness of their numbers rendered them more immediately subject to the authority of the American commanders, neither can it be disputed, that compulsion alone bound them to the adverse cause, their families having been often detained as hostages to answer for their fidelity.”

**Pierre Berton dramatized the war covering the battles in all the regions chronologically in two volumes: *The Invasion of Canada, 1812–1813* (1980) and *Flames Across the Border, 1813–1814* (1981).**

### **Berton depicted the fighting men on both sides:**

At the planning level, the war was marked by incredible bungling. As in so many wars, but especially in this one, the day was often won not by the most brilliant commander, for there were few brilliant commanders, but by the least incompetent. On the American side, where civilian leaders were mixed in with regular army officers, the commands were marked by petty jealousies, vicious infighting, bitter rivalries. On certain memorable occasions, high-ranking officers supposedly fighting the British preferred to fight each other with pistols at dawn. Old soldiers were chosen for command simply because they were old soldiers; they acted like sports heroes long past their prime, weary of the contest, sustained only by the glamour of the past, struggling as much against the ambitions of younger aspirants as against the enemy. Some were chosen capriciously. One general was given an important command solely for political reasons—to get him out of the way.

On the Canadian side, where ‘democracy’ was a wicked word and the army was run autocratically by British professionals, there was little of this. Many of these men, however, were cast-offs from Europe. The officers gained their commissions through purchase, not competence. With certain exceptions, the cream of the British Army was with Wellington fighting Napoleon's forces on the Iberian Peninsula. Aging veterans made up part of the garrison forces in Canada. Boys of fourteen and fifteen fought with the militia. Lacklustre leadership, incompetent planning, timidity and vacillation were too often the concomitants of command on both sides of the border.

**The Canadian militia had been training for war since the American Loyalists fled the United States after the Revolution and fought bravely against the invaders, although without the British regulars, they could not have prevailed. *From Bloody Beginnings; Richard Beasley's Upper Canada* (Davus Publishing: 2008), describes the fighting in the Niagara Region where Richard Beasley was Colonel of the 2nd York Regiment.**

**A lengthy passage from the novel, necessary to cover the whole of the battle, beginning with the Americans**

invading Queenston across the Niagara River from Lewiston, gives one a sense of what the fighting was like.

**Colonel Richard Beasley narrates the action.**

I made sure that my flank companies had shoes but not all had uniforms. At least they had muskets and ammunition because 2000 muskets were captured when we took Fort Detroit. We formed up behind the houses of the village so as not to present a target to snipers from the other shore. Colonel Claus, dressed splendidly in the uniform of his Lincoln Regiment, strode in front of us and stood the men at ease. He told us that he was in command of the militia in Queenston and Niagara and that our flank company under Captain Chisholm would remain in Queenston; the other under Applegarth would find shelter behind the village. Since the regular troops were crowded into the few barracks and public buildings, the militia had to be put into private homes, huts, barns, tents and often in small bivouacs of boards and hemlock branches. Many among the Lincoln militia still lacked shoes and their clothes were little more than rags. The rainy season was about to begin, and it was colder than usual. Claus expected us to remain vigilant because the enemy could attack anywhere along the river at any time. He ordered Major Simons to help the adjutant find suitable accommodation for the men, dismissed us and went directly to me.

“Colonel Beasley,” he said with a sly smile. “I have decided to keep Simons here and to send you back to Burlington Heights.”

I saw at once the advancement of his motive in placing Simons as my second-in-command the previous year. He was effectively assigning command of the fighting part of my regiment to Simons.

“I understand, Colonel,” I smiled. “The sedentary portion of my militia needs my attention.”

“Burlington Heights being our supply centre may have to be defended,” he said stiffly.

I nodded. We saluted and that was the reason for my absence at the Battle of Queenston Heights. That evening I discussed my leaving with the captains of the flank companies, who were apprehensive of Simon’s command over them because when I was present he restrained his tendency to act like a martinet with the men. I warned them that sickness brought on by the rains, poor food and lack of warm clothing and bedding would be their greatest enemy. I knew that they would deal resolutely with the American enemy if it appeared. The next morning I rode back

to the Heights and pondered whether suspicion of my loyalty by a section of the élite was behind my removal from the front lines.

On October 12, 1812, General Brock's aide-de-camp with lawyer William Dickson went across the river from Queenston to negotiate a prisoner exchange. The Americans fired on them despite the white flag they waved. Dickson was a prim, serious man, very unlike his fur-trading brother who lived like an Indian on Lake Michigan, but he had the courage to continue paddling until the firing stopped. They spotted scores of boats along the shore covered with foliage. The Americans kept them waiting for hours while they tried to find an officer to talk with them. When they returned to the Canadian shore, they cleared the citizens from their cottages on the Queenston shore in expectation that the Americans would land on the beach. Our troops were ordered to sleep in full gear. Brock, however, thought the buildup across the river a ruse. He expected an attack at Niagara at the mouth of the river.

Dragoons, stationed at every military post, stood ready to ride with the call-to-arms when their post was attacked. Our extensive system of semaphore telegraphs and beacons from Sugar Loaf on Lake Erie to Fort George at the mouth of the Niagara River were on the *qui vive* and could signal inland to Pelham Heights where sounds from a cannon would convey the movements of the enemy over the entire peninsula by day and night. It had been raining for days. The ground was soaked. Many troops were ill. Some British Grenadiers, protesting that they had not been paid, got drunk in their little stone house in Queenston, mutinied, and, in gaol, expected to be sent to Brock in Niagara. But when the American boats landed on Queenston beaches before dawn on October 13, they were pardoned and took up their arms. When the guns from a redan on the Heights began firing at boats crossing the river, Chisholm's company of the 2nd York jumped from their beds and ran to take up a position to fire at the invaders. They fell back to where Applegarth's flank company of the 2nd York formed a line at the back of the village. Sam Hatt and James Durand brought their Lincoln militiamen alongside them.

The first boats landed upstream of the village and took shelter under a bank rising forty feet above the water. Our guns blew up boatloads of men. Many lay dead or badly wounded as they reached the shore. The treacherous currents took some away from where they intended to land. Meanwhile the American

guns at Lewiston kept up an incessant bombardment on the village.

The main body of our troops tried forcing the invaders back towards the escarpment while our redan on the Heights pounded them from above. All was confusion and horrendous noise.

The Canadian guns on a point down river pinned the invaders at the base of the Heights, many of them dying from wounds, and immobilized others such as their leader Solomon Van Rensselaer. Brock heard the guns above the strong wind seven miles away in Niagara. Calling for reinforcements to follow, he rode in the dim light through a heavy rain over ravines and hollows shouting to militia he met along the way to dash to Queenston. When he arrived an hour later, he saw the Americans fighting in the village and ordered a company of riflemen down off the Heights where it was protecting the redan to help prevent the enemy from getting a beachhead.

By happen chance, some of the invaders came upon a fisherman's path leading up the sheer cliff and climbed it to appear out of the trees on the Heights above the redan. The British gunners, surprised, had no time to spike the guns before they fled. General Brock, standing near the foot of the Heights and realizing his mistake in withdrawing the riflemen, gathered some regulars and militia from the 2nd York and Lincoln regiments and led them over a stonewall in a charge up the hill to repel the Americans from the vantage point that they had gained. Brock, of middle-aged girth and six foot three dressed in a scarlet tunic, made a huge target for an American sharpshooter, who put a bullet through his chest. As Brock fell, he must have considered his impulsiveness to be his last mistake. An aide, stooping to help him, fell mortally wounded. As our men retreated down the hill, Applegarth expected the Americans to pursue them, but the invaders valued their perch on the Heights too much to leave it until they had reinforcements.

Someone had seen James Secord fall in the charge uphill and alerted his wife, Laura, at her farm in St. David's village just behind Queenston. Laura, a slight lady, ran to the battlefield and arrived at where James lay just as two American soldiers were going to kill him. Her pleas for his life attracted the attention of the young officer who had led his men up the cliffside, and he, incensed, arrested them.

Cannonaded from the American shore and shelled from the captured redan, the British retreated behind the village.

Applegarth saw Americans land on the beach and feared that with just one Canadian gun down river shooting at the boats, hundreds would storm toward them. His militiamen, in their first military action, shook with fear as shells cycloned overhead. The Americans who landed in Queenston village, instead of charging the few British forces, plundered the houses. The American officers who could have controlled them were all dead or wounded and like Colonel Van Rensselaer shipped back to the American shore.

As he helped carry the wounded to farmhouses, Applegarth heard British officers say that General Sheaffe was leading reinforcements in double quick time from Niagara. Forces stationed at Chippewa to the west were on their way. But could they arrive on time?

The boats returning to the American side carried the wounded and dead, presenting the ghastly sight of men without arms and legs to those waiting to cross. The militia, which by law did not have to serve on foreign soil, stood back in horror. No one coordinated the boat traffic. There was general confusion and too few boats.

British General Sheaffe, cautious and deliberative, brought his troops round to the back of the Heights and studied the approach while Chief Teyoninhokarawen (John Norton) and his warriors, their naked bodies painted black and red, arriving from Niagara, circled round to the west through the trees and climbed unseen toward the Americans on the Heights. The Black Company under Captain Runchey joined them.

Isaac Swayze was bringing cannon in his car brigade over the muddy roads in the heavy and incessant rain. Royal Artillery gunners arrived with two brass six-pounders and a howitzer on a limber wagon pulled by six horses and two ammunition wagons from Niagara in a two-hour trek and began pounding the American batteries. Americans, wounded from the heavy shelling in the early landings, had crawled to houses in Queenston and been taken back to farmhouses for treatment. Those who could walk were being marched to Niagara under guard.

On the American shore the confusion in launching boats caused some troops to wait for hours to embark which gave the Royal Artillery time to set up its guns on an elevation on the Canadian shore and shell Queenston, driving out plunderers before shelling the American redoubts. A company of the British 41st Regiment, firing as it entered the village, cleared the remaining Americans with bayonets.

Teyoninhokarawen, finding that almost half of his braves deserted to protect their families, who, they feared, would be murdered by the invaders, split his warriors into five files moving up the Heights through thick woods and came out above the American riflemen, who, at the sight of them, fled. Two ladies, whom the Americans captured for their eventual pleasure, broke free and ran towards Norton's band, tears in their eyes. Norton quieted their fears and sent a warrior with them down to the militia, then led his Indians through the underbrush to the attack.

Advancing and retreating the warriors engaged in sporadic sharp shooting from behind trees. Their shrill shouting could be heard across the river and melted the resolve of the American militia, who, already intimidated by the horrific shelling and the blowing up of their boats crossing the river, refused to embark. Hundreds of American militia, pale with fear, deaf to the entreaties of their officers, retreated into the countryside. There was a lull for a brief time before the Canadian guns could be set up when the Americans could have crossed unmolested, but just a few boats landed on the Canadian shore.

Taking up the war cry, his long face wrenched with menace, Joe Willcocks suddenly appeared firing his musket alongside Teyoninhokarawen. "Major Norton! Why don't we charge them?" he shouted to be heard above the deafening musketry.

Norton pointed to the base of the hill where Sheaffe, a parade general, had lined up his troops incorrectly and was trying through the thick smoke to rearrange them in proper battle formation. He held his hand up to signal patience.

Sheaffe positioned the Lincoln militias arriving from Niagara on his left. When the men of the 41st Regiment entered the field from Chippewa, he wheeled them into line on the right. Muskets blazing they moved uphill, an implacable maze of red and green. He knew that the poorly trained American regulars could not stand against lines of British infantry marching steadily toward them. The Americans at the redan were firing down on the village but could not turn the guns to fire at the force coming up the slope. The Mohawks raced across the open field, shouting savagely, and with men from the 1st Lincoln flank companies and Captain Runchey's Black Company fell upon them, killing many and turning the guns on those who fled up the Heights.

The Americans, terrified by the sight of painted savages with their tomahawks, swarming up the hill and whooping, fled before the musket balls tearing their bodies in shreds. Stumbling over long grasses, they were scalped by the pursuing Indians or shot

by Canadian militiamen, who, if they were not wearing cast-off British uniforms, had to be careful that the Indians did not mistake them for the fleeing enemy. Americans, panic-stricken young boys in their first battle, leaped from the cliff into the river and were shot trying to swim. Others hid in the rocks and thick vegetation on the cliffside but were flushed out by the Mohawks, who, infuriated by the loss of some warriors, refused to give quarter. The American Colonel Winfield Scott, his tall frame rising above the shrubbery, waved a white handkerchief and was about to go down under the hatchet when a British officer saved him. Men trying desperately to paddle themselves back to the American shore dissolved in flames as their boats took direct hits. The corpses of soldiers sailed down the river in the strong currents to disappear into Lake Ontario. Between 200 and 300 Americans drowned that day.

The sun broke free of the clouds as the light companies and Indians closed on the remaining invaders. By four in the afternoon, the British bugle sounded, the crackle of musket and boom of cannon fire ceased, followed by an awful silence, broken only by the cries of the wounded. Mangled bodies strewn over the battlefield, on the cliff sides and through the streets of the village testified to the futility of war. Prisoners came out from the woods and hiding-places along the shore. They were either marched or shipped to Fort Niagara. The grieving victors carried Brock's corpse to Isaac Swayze's wagon and returned it to Niagara.

Fort Niagara continued to cannonade across the river at Fort George in Niagara and, destroying many of its buildings, set the town ablaze, while women and children, panic-stricken, dashed in all directions. The three batteries in Fort George, one under Colonel Claus's command, retaliated. Noncommissioned clerks, invalids and the aged carried cartridges and shot to the gunners and hauled tackle amidst falling missiles.

A British regiment spent the next day gathering up the dead in Queenston, discovering the wounded who had spent the night where they fell and making prisoners of those Americans still hiding. The wounded were carted to the public buildings that still stood amongst smoking ruins in Niagara. General Sheaffe sent dragoons riding in all directions to announce the victorious repulse. The spirits of most settlers soared with the news and a sudden confidence in the military swept through the province. Young Hamilton Merritt, captain in the Dragoons, rode along the Ontario Lake shore with the Hamilton boys to Burlington

Heights and brought the news to me who had formed the sedentary militia in a defensive position should the Americans have been victorious and swept over the peninsula. The militia regiments went home for a needed rest. The 1st and 3rd York returned to the capital, York. A fortnight after the battle, General Sheaffe ordered them to enlist recruits, which caused a riotous disturbance that was as alarming as it was unexpected.

**Another passage from the novel ends on a note that reflects Canadian feelings today after Trump's insults and subtle warnings of invasion:**

At the end of September the British prisoners from the Battle of the Thames who had been imprisoned in Kentucky came in boats to Long Point. Almost naked, many without shoes and suffering from the ague, they had been detained in unhealthy conditions by the Americans to prevent them from taking part in the Fort Erie campaign. At the end of October, more boats of prisoners released from American prisons arrived with people in even worse condition, some dead, some dying. The doctor there predicted that just one in twenty would ever regain his strength and former appearance. Dr. Robert Richardson, who with his family was at the Head-of-the-Lake and served the sick troops, told me that his son John was among them. John survived and went on to write brilliant novels which I enjoyed reading in my old age. The point I am making is that this shameful treatment of our people and the brutal and constant depredations of American raiders ingrained in the settlers a bitter resentment against the United States that will probably never be forgotten.

**The Dickson Filibuster 1836: The first minor American invasion of Canada was very minor. James Dickson first appears in history in 1835, when he declared that he would create an Indian federation with himself as president. The first step in his plan to create an empire spanning the western half of North America was to seize the fur outposts of Manitoba, where Métis scouts had a tense relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company. He left Buffalo, New York in August 1836 with 60 volunteers. By the time they reached Manitoba in late December, most of Dickson's volunteers had deserted and he only had a dozen**

followers. Hudson's Bay Company officials offered jobs to his men, and a couple of months later Dickson gave up, vanishing into the West. He left no trace after disappearing in February 1837, although several of his volunteers became prominent local leaders.

**The Patriot War 1837–1838:** In 1837, the large colonies of Upper and Lower Canada (basically modern Ontario and Quebec) were controlled by conservative cliques. When the Panic of 1837 devastated economies across the world, including Canada, desperation bred rebellion. Reformers hoped to topple the Family Compact of conservative elites which governed both provinces with little regard for the farmers and city workers. American sympathizers formed armed groups waiting on the American border for the success of the rebels when they would invade the Canadas. Poorly organized invasions from Detroit on Windsor, from Buffalo on the Short Hills in the Niagara region, and from Navy Island in the Niagara River on Chippewa on the Canadian shore were the main events, easily repulsed. In August 1837, a militia called the Sons of Liberty formed with the intent of expelling Britain from Quebec and declaring independence, under the leadership of Louis-Joseph Papineau. Papineau's men first fought the British on November 6; when they were forced to disband in mid-December, the fighting had taken 300 Canadian and British lives. Another rebellion in Upper Canada under William Lyon Mackenzie was also suppressed in Toronto. The leaders of what became known as the Patriot movement escaped to the United States, where they were wildly popular. They began recruiting American volunteers; on December 13, Mackenzie occupied a small Canadian island near Niagara Falls and declared himself President of the Republic of Canada. He gathered 500 Canadian and American volunteers. The commander of British forces across the river decided to prevent Mackenzie from gaining more reinforcements by stealing a steamship, the *Caroline*, anchored at Mackenzie's base. Sixty Canadians crossed the river and killed an American watchman before scuttling the steamship. The fury over the killing of an American on U.S. soil threatened war, and President Martin Van Buren dispatched a military unit under General Winfield Scott to

defuse the crisis. The crisis boiled over again in November 1838, when 400 American filibusters crossed the Canadian border. A two-week British bombardment killed thirty of the invaders; another 160 were captured. A last attack near Windsor, Ontario in December ended with 23 dead.

It was not a conflict between nations; it was a war of ideas fought by like-minded people against British forces, with the British eventually allying with the US government against the Patriots. Participants in the conflict were members of a secret association known as the Hunters Lodges formed in the United States in sympathy with the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. The organization arose in Vermont among Lower Canadian refugees (the eastern division or Frères chasseurs) and spread westward under the influence of Dr Charles Duncombe and Donald McLeod, leaders of the short-lived Canadian Refugee Relief Association, and Scotland native William Lyon Mackenzie, drawing support from several different locations in North America and Europe.

**Duncombe's Rebellion (1837).** In western Upper Canada Dr. Charles Duncombe raised an army of rebels and made Scotland town their rallying point. They planned to march on Brantford, Hamilton and join up with a victorious Mackenzie but Mackenzie's failure left them faced with a strong militia under Allan MacNab and Six Nations Indians. They fled and many were captured and imprisoned. The rebel headquarters was in Cleveland, Ohio, from which Hunters hoped to invade Canada across Lake Erie if the rebels seemed to be successful. (A full description of the events is in David R Beasley's novel *Sarah's Journey* (Davus Publishing, 2004)

Guillet, Edwin C. *The Lives and Times of the Patriots: An Account of the Rebellion in Upper Canada 1837–1838, and the Patriot Agitation in the United States, 1837–1842* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing Co., 1963)

Kilbourn, William (2008). *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada*. (Toronto: Dundurn.)

The Battle of the Windmill was a conflict along the [Canada–United States border](#). On November 17, 1838, the *Sentinel*, a small newspaper issued in Prescott and edited by Major John Richardson, carried an account of the battle. A makeshift army of “Patriots” including Canadian rebels and their American sympathizers crossed the St Lawrence River to Prescott in eastern Upper Canada. One of its leaders was Nils Von Schoultz, Swedish by birth who had been a freedom fighter in Poland, and on emigrating to America passed himself off as a Pole. A brilliant tactician, he and his men captured a windmill near the town of Prescott and, though abandoned by the intended support troops, fought on tenaciously against British regulars until overwhelmed by superior odds. Arriving from Montreal the day after the battle, Richardson visited the scene of the battle, discussed the engagement with officer friends who had taken part in it and wrote an account of it for his local newspaper the *Sentinel*, which was later re-issued in Montreal (January, 1839) as a pamphlet under the title *Sketch of the Late Battle at the Wind Mill*. Richardson visited Von Schoultz imprisoned in Fort Henry. He took an instant liking to this soldier of fortune who frankly admitted that he had been misled and misinformed. Although defended at his court martial by John A. Macdonald, then a rising young Kingston Lawyer, he was sentenced to be hanged. Richardson, when he reached Toronto, tried to persuade Lieutenant-Governor Arthur to mitigate the sentence but was informed that only Sir John Colborne could exercise clemency on Von Schoultz’s behalf. As Richardson was returning to Montreal, Arthur entrusted him with despatches for the Governor-General concerning an invasion by patriots at Windsor. Richardson stayed to dine with the Governor, but his pleas for clemency for Von Schoultz were of no avail.

Graves, Donald E. *Guns Across the River. The Battle of the Windmill, 1838* (Prescott: Robin Brass Studio, 2001)

## **The Fenian Raids, 1866–1871**

The name Fenian derives from Fiana, bands of Irishmen in centuries gone-by who defended the coasts of Ireland. It was originally a movement within Ireland but after the defeat of a revolt against the British in 1848, its leaders moved to France. The Paris revolution of February 1848 and the sudden collapse of established regimes across Europe raised unrealistic expectations in famine-ravaged Ireland. Eventually, after the migration of thousands of Irish to North America during the years of the Great Hunger, the Fenians organized in New York City and Philadelphia into a bond-selling powerful organization with hundreds of thousands of members—both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Their several invasions of Canada were propelled by the fantasy that Canadians would rise up in support of the invaders to throw off the British yoke. In 1866 the Fenians depended in part on the Irish settled in Canada to destroy bridges and defences when the invasions took place.

One hundred and seventy thousand Irish immigrants fought on both sides in the Civil War, and many of them ended the war hardened soldiers. Ten thousand of them joined the Fenians after the war's end in 1865, under the leadership of Brigadier General Thomas William Sweeny. The Fenians' object in capturing Canada West and Canada East was to hold the country hostage to force Great Britain to surrender Ireland. They intended to take Ottawa and imprison Canadian political leaders to exchange them for Irishmen imprisoned in Britain. They planned for multiple invasions at points in Canada West (now southern Ontario) and Canada East (now southern Quebec) intending to cut Canada West off from Canada East. Three thousand troops would sail from Chicago and Milwaukee through the Great Lakes to land on the shore of Lake Huron, sweep down through London and secure Port Stanley on Lake Erie to take in armaments and supplies shipped across the lake from Cleveland. Meanwhile five thousand Fenians would cross Lake Erie from Cleveland, land at Port Colborne, seize the Welland Canal and march on Hamilton and Toronto in order to draw British troops away from Montreal.

Seventeen thousand crossing the border from Vermont and New York State would take the St Lawrence River, control all communication and invade Montreal. Another force would charge through Lake Champlain, the old invasion route, split with one force taking Quebec city and another moving on Ottawa. Three thousand Irish Canadians and dozens of secret agents would sabotage within the country.

John A. Macdonald, Attorney-General of Canada West, set up the Frontier Constabulary under master-spy Gilbert McMicken with spies among the Fenian groups gathering at various points along the border. Inevitably there were false alarms of invasions and when word came of an invasion from Buffalo set for June 1, 1866, Canadian authorities were dubious and unwilling to call out the defenders unless the threat could be proven to be real. Moreover a Fenian attempt to invade Campobello Island in New Brunswick in April became a farcical embarrassment to the cause, largely because the United States government intervened under the Non-aggression treaty. The US president Johnson, however, generally delayed intervening and did so only when absolutely necessary for fear of losing the Irish vote and owing to lack of resources to police the long and porous border.

Owing to illness and cowardice attributed to some Irish Commanders, the invasions from Chicago and Cleveland did not happen. The great plan dwindled to reordering the Fenians to entrain for Buffalo where weapons had been shipped to an auction warehouse. Despite McMicken's spies reporting on massive arrivals of troops in Buffalo and vessels preparing to ferry them across the Niagara River, Canadian authorities thought it was again just smoke and mirrors. The intended Irish commander did not arrive. A veteran of the Civil War, John McNeill, was chosen to lead. An advance party crossed over at night to land on the Niagara Peninsula, march on Fort Erie and seize the dock to which O'Neil led the main force the next morning. An expected force of 800 had dwindled to 600 because 200 were ensconced in taverns. By the time O'Neill was ready to march on Port Colborne to take the Welland Canal and control communication between Lakes Erie and Ontario his

force did number 800. Tugs ferried provisions across the river all morning.

Upper Canada was defended by teen-agers forming the 13th Regiment in Hamilton, the Queen's Own Regiment of dozens of students at Victoria College then writing their final exams and British troops of 16th and 47th Regiments of Foot stationed in Hamilton. All were led by inexperienced commanders, the two student regiments led by men who had never been in a battle.

The Fenians had breech-loading rifles that could be fired repeatedly—seven shots in ten seconds—plus the surplus muzzle-loading rifles which required many movements of loading through the barrel and tamping down the powder with a ramrod, the use of which they had perfected in many a battle. The Canadian students opposing them had the muzzle-loaders but had not fired one, in fact many young soldiers had not handled a gun. Their officers, inexperienced in war, had paraded their regiments rarely, and had won their commands through financial contributions to the regiments.

The 13th Regiment from Hamilton went by train to Port Colborne and were later joined by the University students of the Queen's Own. Two independent companies, the Caledonia Rifles and York Rifles joined them. Learning that the Fenians had advanced from Fort Erie to elevated land near the town of Ridgeway, they entrained to near Ridgeway and advanced towards the Fenians. After brief fighting that left nine Fenians and 15 Canadian students dead and the others fleeing behind their officers back to Port Colborne, the Fenians retreated to Fort Erie after learning that the British Regiments were closing in on them. The British, however, were slow and, unfamiliar with the territory, took four hours longer than expected to reach Ridgeway.

In mid-June from St. Albans, Vermont, a thousand Fenians, young men this time, invaded Canada's Eastern Townships and were repulsed by Canadian farmers back to the border when, hearing that a British regiment was advancing on them, they retreated into the U.S. While the 1866 raids accomplished little for Irish nationalism, they were a defining moment for Canadian nationalism; in February 1867, the various Canadian colonies extending to

the Pacific Ocean were combined into the Dominion of Canada.

In 1870, a Fenian raid was ambushed at the border and surrendered to American authorities after they lost five dead. In October 1871, a few dozen Fenians marched for Manitoba, hoping to join forces with Metis Indian rebels—they were instead arrested by U.S. forces before they crossed the border. While they attempted a few more invasions of Canada (including building an early submarine), none of them ever really got past the planning stages—an anticlimactic end for a movement that had once counted thousands of men.

David Richard Beasley's novel *Spiral*, which begins in Canada West in 1852, sets the Battle of the Ridgeway in relation to the peoples and events of the greater Niagara region. By centring the story in the city of Hamilton Beasley takes the reader into the everyday lives of the inhabitants confronted by unexpected occurrences between 1850 and 1870. The Irish originating from Corktown in Hamilton play principal roles that tie in with the Fenian invasion and the Irish Canadians willing to collaborate with them. Here is a descriptive passage on this problem from the novel:

News of the defeat of the Canadian regiments spread throughout the region and terrified the people. Irish Canadians, prepared to seize government offices and declare Fenian rule, suddenly appeared in organized groups as if from nowhere. Somerville accompanied Morris Trinian to a tavern in Toronto as scores of men came in from the streets. Trinian called for order and rallied them to action. Pointing to certain men in the crowd, he asked them to be prepared to lead their groups according to the plan which had been months in the formation. A tall lean man with a sharp nose and blazing back eyes broke into the room and breathlessly shouted for attention. There were no invasions in the east and west! Reports came in that American authorities stopped the Irish from crossing the St Lawrence and the Fenians in Michigan had chickened out. Shouting in disbelief, the men insisted on fulfilling their objectives because even if the reports were true, the Fenian army was capturing the Niagara

Region. Trinian agreed but cautioned them to wait for further news.

Somerville slipped away and, walking quickly to the downtown, he hailed a couple of militia guarding the parliament buildings to inform them of the insurrection about to take place. The soldiers, in their teens, looked frightened, undecided how to react. Somerville suggested one of them ride to police that they could see far along the roadway. He would direct them to the tavern.

Within minutes the horsemen galloped up to Somerville who gave them directions and warned them that the men were armed. One of the policemen rode to alert the nearest station of militiamen who had been positioned about the city while the others galloped to the tavern. Somerville, seeing a city official exiting the parliament, called to him for news of the invasion. It was over, the official said, his round face smiling with relief. The Fenians were being forced back to the American shores. Those defenders who were killed and wounded suffered terrible wounds from the new bullets used in the repeating rifles. "It was a close call. We have to be better prepared," he added angrily as he rushed away.

**Apart from American threats of invasion unless Canada gave up parcels of land in Astoria on the west coast and in northern Maine in the east, which Canada acceded to, there have been no further invasions.**

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**Present Day: The self-satisfied confidence assumed by U.S. President Donald Trump when announcing that Canada would become the United States' 51st State could be explained by a warning that Professor Michel Chossudovsky of Ottawa University wrote in the *Global Research Newsletter*.**

Following the creation of US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in April 2002, Defense Secretary **Donald Rumsfeld** announced unilaterally (without consulting the government of Canada) that NORTHCOM's territorial jurisdiction (land, sea, air) extended from the Caribbean basin to the Canadian arctic territories and the North Pole. What this means is that the U.S. gave itself **the right to deploy its military by air, land and sea throughout Canada, including its internal waterways and its territorial waters**. On April 28, 2006, an agreement negotiated behind closed doors was signed between the US and Canada.

The renewed NORAD agreement was signed in Ottawa by the US ambassador and the Canadian Minister of Defense Gordon O'Connor, without prior debate in the Canadian Parliament. The House of Commons was allowed to rubber stamp a fait accompli, an agreement which had already been signed by the two governments.

Operating under a "North American" emblem (i.e. a North American Command), **the US military would have jurisdiction over Canadian territory from coast to coast; extending from the St Lawrence Valley to the Queen Elizabeth archipelago in the Canadian Arctic.**

**The agreement would allow for the establishment of "North American" military bases on Canadian territory. From an economic standpoint, it would also integrate the Canadian North, with its vast resources in energy and raw materials, with Alaska.**

Ultimately what is at stake is that beneath the rhetoric, Canada will cease to function as a sovereign Nation:

- Its borders will be controlled by US officials and confidential information on Canadians will be shared with Homeland Security.
- US troops and Special Forces will be able to enter Canada as a result of a binational arrangement.
- Canadian citizens can be arrested by US officials, acting on behalf of their Canadian counterparts and vice versa.

**[The federal government should cancel such an agreement if still viable.]**

#### **POSTSCRIPT**

My suggestion to the members of the Board of the Norfolk (Ontario) County Historical Society that a pamphlet listing the invasions of Canada by the United States chronologically, informing Canadians of the dangers their forbears faced, would awaken those who dismissed the likelihood of armed invasion to its reality, was welcomed with approval. U.S. President Donald Trump, a psychopath as are some in his cabinet, lacking integrity and reliability, had threatened Greenland with invasion and Canada with economic ruin. His changing the name of the U.S. Department of Defence to the Department of War telegraphs his intentions. I intended the pamphlet be sent to Canadian historical and patriotic societies across the country, who could reprint it for informing their members and communities. The Board, to avoid its name being associated with a political stance, required that the pamphlet, authored and promoted by me, be issued under my name.

I have written more than a score of books on many subjects, all favourably reviewed, mostly with Canadian background—detailed on my website [www.davuspublishing.com](http://www.davuspublishing.com).

—David Richard Beasley, UE, MLS, PhD (Econ)