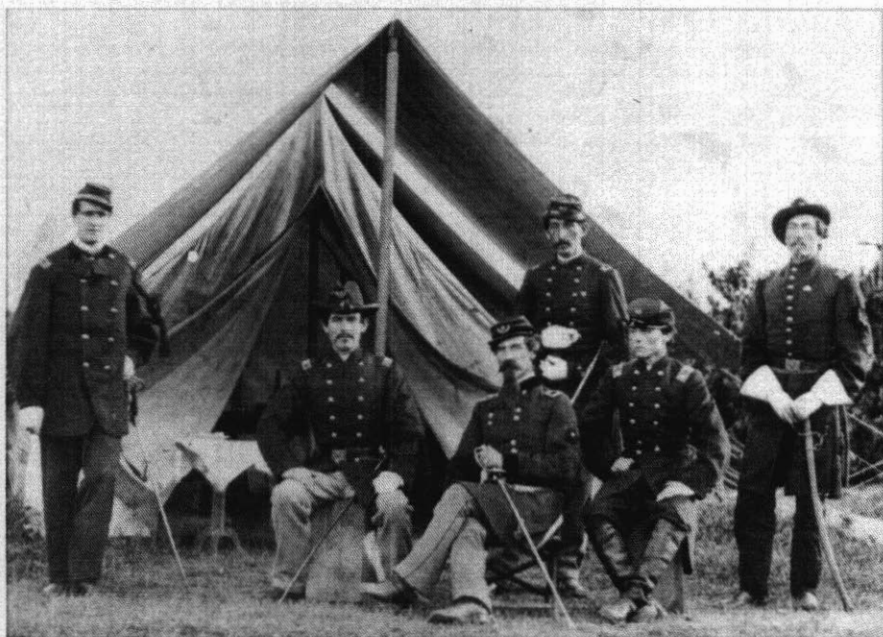


# **CANADIAN BLOOD AMERICAN SOIL**

The Story of Canada's  
Contribution to the  
**American Civil War**



**Jim Cogle**



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AMERICAN SOIL**

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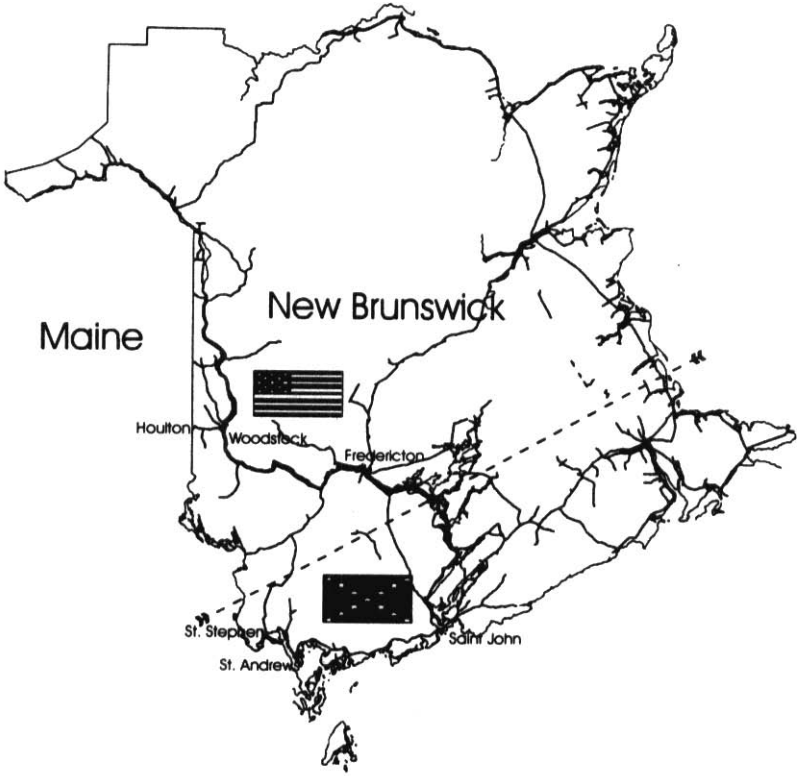
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Bound for Virginia. Canadian officers from the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry Volunteers, Company B (reenactors) head for the Battle of the Wilderness, May 1994.

From left to right are Sgt. Bruce Barber, Cpl. Colin Moore and Cpl. Jason Fillmore. (Photo courtesy of the *Telegraph Journal*)

Those wishing to join the fun and excitement of Civil War reenacting in New Brunswick may contact Sgt. Bruce Barber at (506) 847-6905. All are welcome and the regiment is currently seeking new recruits.





## Acknowledgements

The author owes a debt of gratitude to Daniel F. Johnson for donating material from his extensive collection of eighteenth century historical data and his valuable time. The author also offers a special thank you to Leigh Cummings Jr. of Houlton, Maine for his insights and encouragement, as well as his contribution from family records. Special thanks is extended to all of the kind people in Canada and the United States who wrote to us and contributed valuable family information. Sergeant Bruce Barber of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment (Reenactors) was kind enough to lend us his knowledge of regimental history and statistics as well as his kind encouragement. Bill Briggs added his professional talent to the editing and typesetting while Judith Burrows applied her word processing skills to the original manuscript. A special thank you is extended to my wife, Cheryl Cogle, for her encouragement during the writing of this book. And last, but not least, to the staff of the Harriet Irving Library at the University of New Brunswick for their patience and forbearance during the research for this work. A heart felt thanks to all of you.

## Preface

This narrative was written to inform people in North America regarding the role of Canadians in the American Civil War. It includes both a discussion of public opinion concerning the war and the exploits of individuals. For the purpose of this work the term "Canadian" is used to denote all of those who resided in the former British Colonies of Canada West (Ontario), Canada East (Quebec), Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. It was actually not until two years after the Civil War ended that most of these provinces joined together to form the country known today as Canada.

In accordance with British foreign policy regarding the war, Canada was officially neutral. However, this did not prevent individual Canadians, and residents of certain geographical areas, from supporting one side or the other. About fifty thousand Canadians served in both the armies of the North and the South.

Public opinion in Canada was often divided. In New Brunswick, which borders on the State of Maine, public opinion remained divided throughout the war. Saint John and the southern coastal area openly supported the Confederacy while Fredericton, the capital, and the north central region tacitly supported the Union.

While I lay no claim to original insight or scholarship, I have endeavoured to use historical data to present an accurate overview of Canadian involvement in the American Civil War. Although the narrative discusses Canadian involvement in general, it focuses primarily on the Province of New Brunswick.

This is because New Brunswick, to some extent, mirrored the fractious situation in the United States.

My fondest wish is that this presentation will foster an interest in Civil War history from a Canadian perspective, and that it will help preserve the memory of all those who fought in this great American war.

R.J. (Jim) Cogle  
Fredericton  
New Brunswick  
Canada





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# I

## Differing Opinions

Fredericksburg, Virginia  
May 20<sup>th</sup> 1864

Dear Wife,

*I will try and write a few lines to you as I lie here on my back, suffering all I can endure. It is hard work to write so that you can read it, but I thought you would rather see my own hand writing on the paper than any other. They all say I am getting along well. I have lost both my legs just above the knees and am very weak; but by the blessing of God I hope to live through it. Pray for me, dear wife. Many kisses to the children and much love to all. From your suffering husband.*

**D**AVID NICKERSON wrote this letter to his wife from an army field hospital in Virginia. He was a member of Company H, 22<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Volunteers, and received his wounds at the Battle of the Wilderness, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1864. Cpl. Nickerson had left for the war two years earlier from the picturesque little village of Hampstead, New Brunswick. He was moved from the field hospital in Virginia to Harewood Hospital in Washington where he died on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Left behind in Hampstead were his young widow and two small children. David Nickerson was thirty-two.

This is not an unusual story. Canada had many widows after the American Civil War. Of the fifty thousand Canadians who fought in this war about fourteen thousand did not return.

The decades of the 1850s and 60s were periods of dramatic expansion in Canada and the United States. They were also times of political tension. Canada, recovering from the rebellion of the late 1830s, was heading for a political stalemate between the English and French speaking communities. The United States was feverishly trying to reach a compromise between the slave-holding agrarian South and the industrialized North. The failure to reach a lasting compromise led eventually to the American Civil War.

From the outset Canada was involved. Partially as a result of the invention of the telegraph, Canadians were kept abreast of developments in the United States. The Missouri Compromise, the Dred Scott case, the beating of Senator Sumner, and the John Brown raid were all widely reported in Canada. In terms of popular impact, however, the tracts and periodicals from the various abolitionist societies were much more important. So too were the fiery sermons from Canadian abolitionist preachers. Tracts and sermons took the abolitionist message into every little hamlet from coast to coast.

Certain factions in Canada were already agitated about slavery when a preacher's wife from the state of Maine wrote a little book with the title *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Beecher Stowe's book was an immediate best seller in Canada and in many other countries around the world. Winston Churchill tells us that by the end of 1852 more than a million copies had been sold in England alone; ten times as many as had ever been sold of any other book except the Bible. By presenting a series of poignant incidents such as the break up of Negro couples, children taken from parents, beatings and evil slave-dealers, she did

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much to harden world attitude toward the South. It was very effective propaganda. Churchill called it "the herald of the storm."

So powerful was the influence of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in New Brunswick that "it provided the theme for sermons and editorials, and for an anti-slavery exhibition held in Fredericton in 1854." Slavery had been abolished in New Brunswick twenty-one years earlier because, as John Brebner says, "their owners could not depend on the courts to recognize such property rights." Residents could now quite comfortably climb on the anti-slavery band wagon. Ironically, there seems to have been no recorded cries of indignation when Black slaves were shackled and worked in this province.

Canadians were generally against slavery, although many in the upper echelons of society, and certain geographic areas, supported the Southern states. The best available information indicates that ordinary Canadians were largely pro-Union throughout the war. The voice that was most often heard, however, was that of the pro-Confederates. This is primarily because during that period many of the newspapers had Tory or Irish Catholic editors who supported the Southern states. Fred Landon, Canada's leading authority on the Civil War, makes the following observation:

It was unfortunate for Canada that British upper class opinion had inclined so strongly towards the South in the earlier years of the Civil War. There was always an element in Canada which looked to England for its views on public questions, and though this element in Canada was but a fraction of the population its attitude did not escape American attention. Canada, as a British dependency, shared the blame for the sarcastic utterances of The

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Times, the wretched cartoons of Lincoln which appeared in *Punch*, and the outspoken sympathy for the South voiced in certain social circles. While there was a decided change in English public opinion after the battle of Gettysburg had sent Lee reeling back into Virginia, the American memory of earlier sneers was not easily eradicated. In Canada, however, a feeling that the North was in the right became more and more deeply implanted as the war passed into its later stages. The figure of Lincoln loomed ever larger in the eyes of Canadians and emancipation emphasized the great moral issue that lay behind the struggle.

Public opinion in New Brunswick was divided. Fredericton and the north central part of the province were solidly pro-Union while Saint John and southern New Brunswick favoured the Confederacy.

Neutrality was probably the preferred option for many, and this was emphasized by the editor of the *Toronto Globe* in the edition of February 20<sup>th</sup> 1862. "There were few of any party in Canada who desired to bring their prejudices on either side into practical operation; the wise policy of neutrality adopted by the Mother Country has commended itself to the good sense of our people."

There is good reason to believe that there existed a class based division of opinion regarding the war. The upper classes were purported to support the South while ordinary Canadians supported the North. This may help to explain why so many ordinary people joined Northern armies. The upper class in Canada seems to have greatly admired the gentry of the Old South and envied their opulent life-style. According to Samuel Eliot Morison, "The United States had long been obnoxious to

European ruling classes and to Canadian Tories for the encouragement that it afforded to liberal and radical elements.”

In reference to the largely protestant and pro-Union people of Fredericton a Saint John Catholic newspaper claimed: “There are as many ... rabid anti-slavery men ... as in New England. The sentiment is for them very cheap, and it greatly helps to feed that inordinate self-complacency which is a characteristic of the puritanical everywhere.”







## II

### Choosing Sides

CANADA'S FIRST physical involvement with the Civil War came with John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia in 1859. John Brown was an American, but some of his cohorts were not. Stewart Taylor, a young man from what is now Ontario, joined the raiding party, and so did William Leeman and a black man named Osborne Anderson. Leeman and Anderson lived to tell the tale, but Taylor died the next day from wounds he received in the raid.

Although John Brown received considerable support for his plan from Baptists and Blacks in southern Ontario, Anderson was the only one to actually accompany Brown on the raid. Canadians generally abhorred Brown's use of violence to free the slaves and were quick to support his execution. At the same time they felt that this incident could well lead to conflict. The *New Brunswick Reporter*, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1859 states that "The execution of John Brown which is to take place at Harper's Ferry today will, in all probability, be the signal for a fearful outbreak between the two great sections of the American Union...."

Here we find an element of hypocrisy. While Canadians were united in their denunciation of John Brown's raid they none-the-less sheltered Brown's supporters and financiers who hid in Canada because they feared they might be hanged for treason.

It is also worth pointing out that the swords carried by Brown and his men were originally intended to kill Canadians.

Manufactured for gunners in an earlier period, the swords had straight blades and were shorter than cavalry swords. John Brown got them from a secret society in Ohio. The "Grand Eagles," as they were called, had plans of conquering Canada. The swords, complete with an ornate eagle etched into each blade, were donated to Brown's vigilante scheme to end slavery.

Following the John Brown raid, abolitionist propaganda seemed to become more intense. Newspapers reported the worst aspects of slavery. There was an unconfirmed, yet published, story about a Woodstock man who sold an eighteen year old Negro youth for \$1,200 while visiting Virginia. He allegedly received a further \$3,500 for a black carpenter. Apparently neither incident was true. One editor claimed there were forty-five thousand runaway slaves in Canada valued at \$1,000 each. He concluded that "Canada was harbouring forty-five million dollars worth of American property." Another damning report to circulate in the Canadian press was that of a plantation slave's death. "After being whipped for three hours he was swabbed with turpentine and forced to work in the blazing sun, dying in frightful agony." This type of abolitionist propaganda was in front of Canadian readers on a regular basis.

There is some evidence to support the claim that most of the propaganda was circulated by religious fundamentalists. At the time of the Civil War, Canadian evangelicals were very much akin to their counterparts in New England. Oddly enough, since then fundamentalists, such as the Baptists and that basic type of denomination, identify much more readily with their brothers and sisters in the former Confederacy.

On the very day that South Carolina seceded from the Union, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1860, the editor of the *Morning Freeman*, a New Brunswick Catholic newspaper, rebuked the fundamentalists and refuted the threat of secession. The editor, who was

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pro-Confederate, claimed that "...thousands of preachers whose theology is politics, and with whom popular excitement, manufactured to suit their purposes, is the most glorious manifestation of the Grace of God and the working of the Spirit" were spreading the secessionist gospel. He further ascribed problems in the union to "Germans and other atheist socialists." This Catholic writer went on to assure his readers that secession wasn't a concern because "...zeal for abolition was less than that for the dollar, the real Yankee Almighty." The editor also pointed out that another reason not to fear secession was that "...the people of the North, with very few exceptions, cared little for the slave...."

Negroes complained that prejudice was just as prevalent in Canada as it was in the United States. The essential difference was that in Canada their liberty and person were protected by law. Interestingly enough, most ex-slaves returned to the South after the war. They seemed to prefer the proximity of their families and friends to making a new life in Canada.

While the Irish Catholic newspaper in Saint John was reflecting what was basically a pro-slavery, pro-Southern position, the Protestant, pro-Union Fredericton newspaper, the *New Brunswick Reporter*, took the opposite approach. "The Southern states continue to belch forth their threats of disunion, because they 'have been foiled—legitimately foiled'—at the late presidential election." The editorial went on to state that the writer hoped that "old rail-splitter" would "split up" the dreadful system of slavery.

New Brunswickers, and Canadians in general, did not believe that the Southern states would secede. The moderate pro-Northern elements were very appreciative of President Lincoln's conciliatory approach. They wanted an end to slavery but felt it could be accomplished without provoking secession. Abolition-

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ists, however, were very disappointed when Mr. Lincoln failed to deal with the slavery issue immediately. In fact, there is some evidence to indicate that a substantial minority in Canada were disgusted with Lincoln until after the Emancipation Proclamation in the fall of 1862. Some even switched loyalties and supported the South. But not the residents of central New Brunswick. Fredericton and Woodstock seem to have remained solidly pro-Union throughout the war. This would be congruent with Stephen Leacock's assessment. He claims that "In Canada the plain people were overwhelmingly for the North, and so too in the Maritimes."

Soon after South Carolina seceded it became clear that Saint John was largely pro-Confederate. One of the reasons for this may have been that Saint John shipping would benefit greatly from a breakup of the Union. Another, and possibly more significant contributing factor, was that Saint John had become predominantly Irish Catholic. According to some writers these people tended to be soft on the slavery issue. While most Irish immigrants fought for the North, they were less than enthusiastic supporters of abolition. One reason for this seems to have been that the Irish, who were mostly labourers, feared that if Negroes were free to compete with them in this marketplace, it would cause their wages to be lowered. The Irish may also have been influenced by the pro-Confederate propaganda coming from their newspaper, the *Morning Freeman*.

Saint John became more supportive of the Southern cause as the war progressed. Confederate ships and military agents operated out of her port and Saint John boys served in the Confederate armies. This prompted a visit from high ranking military officers in the fall of 1863. Confederate generals John Hunt Morgan and Joe Wheeler spent enough time in this seaside town that their names were "household words." At least part of

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the reason for their visit to Saint John was to rendezvous with some of their men who had escaped from a Federal Prison in Ohio. While in town they also had a meeting with Saint John residents Vernon Locke, John Braine and H.A. Parr who were serving with Kentucky regiments. Braine, who was a lieutenant, had just spent six months in Fort Warren prison in Boston.

As Saint John showed her pro-Confederate bias, Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick, let the world know that she took the opposite stance. (This was not unusual since Fredericton and Saint John had been rivals for years.) The *Fredericton Reporter* screamed that "The sooner so-called Southern chivalry is shut out of the rest of the world the better." In the same editorial the paper claimed secession mattered little since no civilized power in Europe would recognize the Southern states as anything other than "a turbulent faction of savages and slave-breeders." Thus, New Brunswick became, in some respects, a microcosm of the United States. Southern New Brunswick pro-Confederate with northern and central New Brunswick pro-Union.

When news of the fall of Fort Sumter reached Canada the reaction was similar to that in the United States; the abolitionists celebrated and the intellectuals pondered an ominous future. As the older generation considered the implications of the matter, young Canadians slipped across the border to join Northern regiments or boarded ships to join Southern ones. Eventually thousands of Canadians served in the armies of both the North and the South. Recruiters for both sides were active in Canada almost immediately, even though their activities were illegal. It was also illegal for Canadians to join foreign armies. "Fences and walls in the Canadian cities were plastered with notices describing the opportunities for employment that existed in the States. Undoubtedly some of these were legitimate; others were

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nothing but bait to lure the applicant into a situation where to enlist was his only recourse, and warnings were printed cautioning those who accepted them as valid to investigate carefully before going to the United States." But, like cross-border shopping and smuggling, minor technicalities such as the law did not deter people. The "longest undefended border in the world" was simply too easy to cross.

The actual number of Canadians who fought in the Civil War is not known precisely. Figures range from forty to over one hundred thousand. While there is no way to determine the actual number, most writers agree that 50,000 is probably fairly accurate. Stephen Leacock says that "at least 50,000 British Americans [Canadians] fought in the Federal ranks." Fred Landon, writing in the *Dalhousie Review*, says that "...in the later years of the war sturdy Canadian recruits by the thousands entered the armies of Grant and Sherman." Marcus Hansen, from Yale University, quotes figures from work done in 1869 by Benjamin A. Gould. Mr. Gould's *Investigations into the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers*, based upon state and regimental records, lists 53,532 as having been born in what is now Canada. He says that New York had about 20,000 Canadians, Illinois had 4,400 and the other border states had about 3,000 each. Robin Winks, writing in the *Canadian Historical Review*, questions Gould's figures. Investigations since that time, however, would seem to substantiate most of Gould's findings. Tom Brooks, an authority on Canadian involvement in the Civil War, concurs with those who have found that although about 50,000 Canadians fought in the Civil War, some were already working in the United States. Mr. Brooks says that "I do not for a minute believe that 50,000 Canadians crossed the border to enlist. I do, however, believe that those Canadians who

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crossed the border, coupled with those Canadians already living in the United States could easily reach fifty thousand.”

Mr. Brooks' assessment seems realistic. It is known, for example, that a number of New Brunswick boys were working in the lumber woods of Maine when they enlisted. Others like Calixia Lavallee, who wrote *Oh Canada*, our national anthem, fought for the North but had lived in the United States for years. He later died in Boston. This author agrees with Mr. Brooks that while thousands crossed the border to enlist, thousands were already living, at least part of the year, in the United States.







### III

## Canada Prepares for War

CANADA was a British colony when the war broke out. As such her foreign affairs and much of her domestic policy was decided by Great Britain. It was not until two years after the war that Canada gained her independence. Control by the mother country presented great difficulty. Canadians wanted neutrality, but Britain thought about helping the South because there were economic advantages to be gained from a dissolution of the United States.

For Canada the problems began when some members of the British government unofficially welcomed the secession of the Southern states. The main reason for their opinion was that two smaller Americas would be less threatening to British shipping and the prestige of the old order in Europe. American style democracy was anathema to most politicians and rulers in the mid-nineteenth century. This included Sir John A. MacDonald, Canada's first prime minister, and the other Fathers of Confederation. Many, if not most, of Canada's difficulties can be traced to a lack of democracy in the Canadian political system.

Just as some British politicians were openly celebrating the demise of the Union, a certain reality began to dampen their celebration. Canada was at risk of invasion, should the North wish to retaliate. While England wanted to rid herself of the responsibility for Canada, she still wanted access to her natural resources. Another complicating factor was that, should the United States have chosen to invade Canada, a portion of the

population might have cheered them on. Ordinary Canadians were developing a taste for democracy and looked longingly at the more open institutions of the United States. The staunchly pro-British upper class, however, feared democracy and did all they could to make sure it stayed in America.

Once it became clear that the union would not be divided without a major war, Britain felt it prudent to remain neutral. This was not an easy task since her economic and political interests were best served by an independent South. British textile mills were heavily dependent on Southern cotton. The blockade of Southern ports eventually had a drastic effect with important Britishers losing money and thousands of ordinary people losing their jobs. Initially, however, there was plenty of cotton because large quantities were shipped before the blockade of Southern ports.

It is worthy of note that even though British workers eventually suffered, they were solidly behind the North, and especially President Lincoln.

Just when things seemed to be levelling off there occurred a nasty incident: the "Trent Affair." The Trent was a British mail ship that also carried passengers. On November 8<sup>th</sup> 1861 two of those passengers were Senators James Mason and John Sliddell, Confederate diplomatic agents bound for England. After leaving Havana the ship was stopped and boarded by Captain Charles Wilkes of the United States Navy. He seized the two senators, along with their secretaries, and packed them off to a federal fortress. This was illegal under international law.

Wilkes was touted as a hero in the Northern press, but the British were outraged. Lord Russell was prepared to "rattle the sabre" and demand an apology, in less than complimentary terms. Fortunately, Prince Albert toned down the request to Mr.

Seward and the incident blew over. Although President Lincoln feared political fallout if he were seen to acquiesce to British demands, he listened to the wise counsel of Senator Sumner. A potential war with Britain was avoided when the President had Secretary Seward assure the British government that the four Southerners would be “cheerfully liberated.” Although the incident was defused without bloodshed, it nonetheless left a feeling of enmity in both camps. It also raised the question of what the North would do next? Some felt that Secretary Seward might try to avert a civil war by provoking a war with England. How seriously this possibility was considered is lost to history. Taking no chances, England decided she best reinforce her largest colony, Canada—just in case. What unfolded was an interesting scenario.

When the war began there were about 4,400 British soldiers garrisoned in the Canadian provinces. These were, or were supposed to be, in times of conflict augmented by the Canadian Militia. The militia, however, were not exactly what one would call “crack troops.” Although every male between 16 and 60, by law, had to belong to a provincial militia company, this did not mean they were active. In fact, quite the opposite. Again, by law, they were supposed to train at least one or two weekends each year. But, since they were not paid for this exercise, some years they didn’t drill at all.

Then there was the annual muster of the battalion. Armed with all manner of weapons and clad in everything from buckskins to ancient uniforms, the boys went on parade. Dubbed the “sedentary” militia they marched for a bit and then broke out the kegs of rum and whiskey. After a rollicking good drunk and boisterous camaraderie the boys headed home to forget about military life for another year. God save the Queen.

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The “sedentary” militia comprised about a quarter of a million men, but for obvious reasons it was felt that they were somewhat useless in the defence of the colony. Along with the “sedentaries” there were also about 8,500 paid volunteers. These units trained annually for about two or three weeks and were fairly well equipped.

Canadians have always been notorious for neglecting their military. Much to Mother England’s chagrin, this wasn’t to change, notwithstanding the American threat. When England pushed Canada to arm herself for defense in case the Americans invaded, she refused. The infamous Militia Bill was introduced by Her Majesty’s Loyal Canadian Government, but it was defeated in the House. England was furious. British newspapers railed that Canadians were not “manly enough to defend themselves,” and the British government made plans to remove Canada from the Empire as soon as possible. Colonies had come to be regarded as a nuisance in general, and Canada, in particular, was being quite troublesome.

It wasn’t that Canada couldn’t or wouldn’t defend herself, or, for that matter, go to war. She had in 1812 and would again in the Boer War, both World Wars, Korea and most recently, the Gulf War. In the 1860s Canada simply wanted to remain neutral. There were good reasons for this. She had an amicable relationship with the United States and a very beneficial trading agreement. There were close trade ties and blood ties with both the Union and the Confederacy. Hansen and Brebner comment on this topic in their excellent book, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*.

There are North American families today for instance, some of whose members have changed political allegiance back and forth about once a generation since

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1750, as the continental migrations have crossed and recrossed the international boundary. Excellent as the reasons may be for warm Canadian allegiance to Canada on the part of the present generation, these sentiments should never be allowed to exclude an equally justifiable pride in descent from the mingled peoples of the past who created the common North American heritage.

At that time many Canadians were second and third generation Americans. Also many Americans were Canadian emigrants. General Beaugard is believed to have been one of them. Families visited each other back and forth across the border and intermarried quite frequently without regard for the international boundary. This was particularly true in the Maritimes. Canadians simply did not want a family feud if it was avoidable.

England was forced to take the lead. In December 1861 about 1,800 soldiers boarded ships and headed for Canada. Canadians also mustered, but to a much lesser extent than was desired. Even the Governor General seemed to drag his feet.

The first ships arrived the day after Christmas, the same day that Lincoln freed the Southern senators taken captive in the Trent Affair. (To a large extent this made the whole exercise superfluous.) Some of the troops landed in Quebec, others in Halifax, Nova Scotia, some in Saint John, New Brunswick and others at St. Andrews, near the Maine border. All did not go well as the troops arrived before their supplies and in the middle of a terrible snow storm. Since the provinces were not prepared they were put up in any available space. This included converted warehouses and church basements. Within days they left for Ontario and Quebec.

slavery question. As discussed earlier, Irish Catholics, a large segment of the population, seemed to feel that if the slaves were freed there would be increased competition for their own jobs. Most worked as labourers and were having it tough enough without increased competition. Should Blacks move north in larger numbers than had already come through the "underground railroad," they feared wages would be lowered.

Whatever the reason, by the summer of 1862 public opinion in Canada, and Europe, was beginning to question the wisdom of the war. This sentiment also applied to many people in the Northern states who wondered out loud whether or not preserving the Union was worth a protracted fight with their own countrymen. A few Upper Canadian newspapers suggested that England and France should become involved, or at least give official recognition to the Confederacy. Southern New Brunswickers were more exuberant.

Confederate victories in June 1862 brought about great jubilation in the port city of Saint John. The Confederate flag was raised and a celebration ensued. A sea captain from Rockland, Maine wrote that he was mobbed by a pro-Confederate crowd. They allegedly insulted the "stars and stripes" and ruffed him up. He complained that his flag had been "reviled by the Irish and renegade-Yankee element" and that "well wishers of the Union" did not bother to stand up for him. Fortunately, police and customs officials did come to his rescue.

In St. Andrews, a smaller port city a few miles from the American border, a pro-Confederate street parade was held. It must have been a peculiar sight to see the townspeople troop the Confederate flag through the streets of this lovely old Loyalist town.

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*Down along the main street in St. Andrews by the Sea  
The people flew the Rebel Flag defiant as could be.  
They praised the South and cussed the North  
With their flag parading proudly back and forth.*

About twelve miles from St. Andrews and directly across the river from Calais, Maine lies the town of St. Stephen. The local newspaper at this time was the *St. Croix Herald*. The paper had for some time been provoking the pro-Confederates of southern New Brunswick with its overtly pro-Northern and Republican editorials. In late June 1862 the editor, Mr. Hay, committed the unpardonable. He not only criticized Britain's neutrality, but also maligned the provincial Confederates. Worse yet, he published a speech by Senator F.A. Pike of Maine in which the Senator allegedly abused "everything British and Colonial." Hay gave his approval to this speech and further support to the Federal cause.

Retaliation was swift. A mob of pro-Confederates, possibly from St. Andrews, completely destroyed the *Herald's* offices and printing press. Mr. Hay had to flee to Calais where he rebuilt in October of that same year and continued the propaganda war.

This scene of mob violence put New Brunswick in the American news. The *New York Herald* ran a headline styled "New Brunswick on the Rampage."

The Bluenoses of New Brunswick have torn down the office of the *St. Croix Herald* because it spoke well of the United States. New Brunswick is a province of two hundred thousand inhabitants who are fed by the United States, and who would starve to death in six weeks if their supplies of food from this country were cut off. The chief city, Saint John, is a group of huts, many of them inhabited by rogues who have made a few pennies

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since the war broke out by lending their names to the illicit traders who have run the blockade. With an area more than four times the size of Massachusetts, the Province has never been self-supporting; and if it were submerged in the sea and its inhabitants swept away, nobody would miss either the one or the other. The wonder is not that such people tore down the newspaper office, but that they had a newspaper at all.

It should be noted that while some Canadian newspapers were pro-Union and some were pro-Confederate, most recognized the value of American institutions. Only a very few were for dissolution. In general the Canadian press was against slavery and felt that by upholding the Constitution the Union was inadvertently supporting the "peculiar institution." They referenced the Dred Scott case in which the United States Supreme Court decided that according to the constitution Negroes are property and not people. The Fugitive Slave Law also provided fodder for the propaganda mill. Canadians, like Northerners, found it reprehensible that, by law, escaping slaves had to be returned to their Southern masters. Bounty hunters were anathema to abolitionists and most others in Canada.

The *Evening Globe*, in response to pro-Confederate diatribe from the *Morning Freeman* in Saint John, chose to state another perspective. The *Globe* claimed that the South presented "the singular spectacle of eight millions of people struggling to overthrow the freest form of government in the world—a form of government whose only fault is that it is too free—because they could no longer make it subservient to their own selfish purposes." While giving high marks to the American political system the *Globe* gave a somewhat lower grade to the Governor of

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Maine. He was referred to as "a man whose ideas upon more than one great question are far behind the genius of the day."





## IV

### Emma Joins the Fight

**M**ANY CANADIANS joined the Civil War during the first few months. The numbers would increase dramatically over the next three years. One of those to join the war early was the famous Sarah *Emma* Edmonds, alias Franklin Thompson.

Emma Edmonds was born in 1841 near Fredericton in the community of Magaguadavic (Macadavic). She was a restless girl and left home at an early age. Her tyrannical British father was the primary reason, so we are told. From New Brunswick she went to Connecticut and then to Flint, Michigan. It was there that she joined Company F of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Volunteer Regiment as Franklin Thompson.

From the beginning of her military career she saw action. Bull Run was her first encounter, then the Battle of Blackburn's Ford. Next she went with McClellan's troops on the First Peninsular Campaign of 1862. At first she was a male nurse and mail carrier, however, this was soon to change.

As a nurse, Frank, as she was called, often went out into the country to find food for her patients. One day as she was returning from one of her foraging expeditions she met a burial detail. They had just come back from burying a young man that she had known – and may have loved – back in her home province. The young New Brunswicker had been shot while riding too close to enemy picket lines. Emma was so traumatized by his death that she decided to become a military spy to seek revenge for the loss of her friend.

She began her career in espionage by covering her skin with dark makeup and donning a wig of real hair. Disguised as "Ned," a Negro worker, she slipped behind Confederate lines. At Yorktown, Virginia, Emma crept quietly past the Federal guards and the Confederate pickets without ever being detected. All she carried was a loaded pistol and a few crackers. During the night she met a group of Blacks who were taking food to the Confederate soldiers on picket duty. They fed her, poured her a cup of coffee and then went on. When they returned from the line she simply followed them into Yorktown without ever being detected.

At daybreak Emma was put to work for the Confederates which gave her a great opportunity to collect information for General McClellan. She carefully sketched in accurate detail the position of gun emplacements and breastwork design. A number of cannons were noted to have "wooden barrels." Fakes intended to fool the Union as to actual Confederate fire power. After she was satisfied that she had accomplished her mission, she hid the sketch in her shoe and headed back to the Union camp. Before she left, however, she sojourned among the Confederate soldiers to get the latest news regarding troop movements and other vital information such as troop strength. She even got to see Gen. Robert E. Lee whom she described as "...the best engineer in the Confederacy." Probably one of the most vital pieces of information that she gleaned was the fact that the Confederate spies had visited the Union camp and were well informed. So well informed that they were planning to evacuate the town because it could not be defended against McClellan's siege guns. For relaying this vital information she was congratulated by the General himself.

Emma became very ill in the spring of 1863, having contracted malaria in the swamps of Virginia. Unable to go to an

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army hospital for fear her sex would be discovered, she sought medical help in Ohio. Here she wrote an account of her experiences which was published in 1865. *Nurse and Spy or Unsexed, The Female Soldier* became very popular, selling over 175,000 copies. From her book sales she gave thousands of dollars to help the wounded soldiers whom she had "learned to love as brothers."

Like most Maritimers, Emma could not stay away from home forever. At the end of the war in 1865 she returned to New Brunswick. Two years later she married Linus H. Seelye whom she had known since her childhood days. The couple had three children, all of whom died before adolescence, but they eventually adopted two boys who grew to manhood.

Emma was in poor health for most of her life. After settling in Kansas in the 1870s her health deteriorated even further. During this time she began contacting her former military friends from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Infantry. They convinced her to approach the United States government for a pension and back pay that was owing to her. At first she refused, but later took their advice. Finally, in 1884, the United States Congress authorized a pension of \$12.00 per month be paid to "Sarah E. Seelye, alias Franklin Thompson."

Even though Emma's former comrades were shocked to learn of her real identity they welcomed her with open arms. In 1884 she was invited to their reunion in Flint, Michigan as Mrs. Seelye. Later, while living in Texas, she joined the George B. McClellan Post No.9 of the Grand Army of the Republic in Houston. She was the only female. The boys recognized a true soldier when they saw one. Emma was not only accepted, but was also respected — both as a soldier and as a woman.

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Finally the malaria she contracted in Virginia thirty-five years earlier brought about her death. Emma had suffered greatly in her declining years, so when death came, it was a welcome friend. The end and essence of her life has been immortalized in the words of Allison Brewer.

On a September afternoon in 1898, in the City of La Porte, Texas, a bugler's taps drifted sorrowfully through the still afternoon air. For the first time in the history of the American states she had helped to unite, a woman was being buried with full military honours; a woman who would be remembered as a truly remarkable hero of the American Civil War.



## V

### The Forgotten Fifty Thousand

**E**mma Edmonds was not the typical Canadian volunteer. Most were not nurses, spies or women. The typical Canadian who served in the Civil War was a young man in his twenties who had worked as a tradesman, farm helper, lumberjack or fisherman. There were some notable exceptions such as Fred Howe, the son of Joseph Howe, Premier of Nova Scotia, and sons of upper class folk from Ontario and Quebec. Again with some exceptions, most Canadian volunteers were from rural areas or small communities. This is not surprising since Canada was mostly rural at that time.

The obvious question is, "Why did these Canadian boys risk their lives in an American war?" There is no simple answer. Money played a part, but only a part, and so did the possibility for adventure. Many were motivated by more altruistic sentiments. A belief in freedom combined with anti-slavery sentiments put young men in the ranks of the Northern armies while a love for the Old South sent others to the Confederacy. Robert Azor Hay, for example, left Saint John nine years before the war, and after remaining some years in the West went south to Natchez, Mississippi where he was joined by a younger brother. At the outbreak of the rebellion, being imbued with a love for the South, they immediately volunteered their service and were enrolled in Scott's First Louisiana Cavalry. They were engaged in nearly all of the principal battles fought during the first two years of the war, including the battles of Shiloh, Chancellorsville,

Williamsburg, Corinth, and Murfreesboro. In July 1863 they were made prisoners in Kentucky and confined in Camp Chase, Ohio. During the following winter they were moved to Fort Delaware where they were detained as prisoners until March 7<sup>th</sup> 1865 when they were exchanged. They went South and rejoined their regiment which was forced to surrender at Gainesville, Alabama in May. Some days before his death Robert left Natchez on foot and walked 20 miles into Concordia County where he became ill and died three days later. The deceased had received a Minié ball through the right arm which probably contributed to his demise. Robert Hay was 37 at the time of his death.

It should be noted that many from the South served in the armies of the North and vice versa. Henry Clay, the famous senator from Kentucky, had three grandsons who fought for the Union, and four who fought for the Confederacy. President Lincoln had three brothers-in-law who died while fighting for the South. Jefferson Davis had a number of in-laws fighting for the North. Brothers fought brothers. Maj. Gen. T.L. Crittenden, U.S.A. was a brother to Maj. Gen. G.B. Crittenden C.S.A. It is little wonder then that we find Maritimers and Canadians serving on both sides in this highly personal and emotional war.

We turn now to the issue of money. Those who believe that pay was the primary motive for Canadian enlistments may have not fully considered some important information. They have overlooked the fact that Canada in the 1860s was fairly prosperous with low unemployment. In the Maritimes the shipbuilding industry was booming and so was the lumber trade. There was a gold strike in Nova Scotia. Money was a factor, but only one of several. By 1863, when enlistments began increasing, the bounty for enlisting in one of the Maine regiments was \$700, which was a very large sum for that time. What must be remembered, how-

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ever, is that while pay increased, so did horror stories about the war.

Canadians who enlisted in 1862 were active participants in two of the bloodiest battles in history. The Battle of Antietam in Maryland and the Battle of Fredericksburg in Virginia. Of the 41,000 casualties in these two battles, many were Canadians. Stories of the outrageous carnage were to be found in Canadian newspapers, private correspondence and heard from wounded soldiers returning home. In little Canadian towns, and American ones, when mom got a letter telling that her boy had been wounded, taken prisoner, or worse yet, buried, the news was not long in spreading. During the Civil War people all over Canada mourned the loss of sons, fathers, uncles and cousins.

The type of story reaching Canada can be well illustrated by those that followed after the Battle of Fredericksburg. The Army of the Potomac, pride of the North, had just received a new commander prior to the battle; General Ambrose E. Burnside, a handsome West Point graduate, who would cause tears to be shed by mothers on both sides of the border. Thousands of little grave markers in Virginia are permanent reminders of Burnside's incompetence and the men's gallantry.

Opposite Fredericksburg, and behind the Rappahannock River, Burnside massed 113,000 men. Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson had 75,000 men ready on the South side of the river before Burnside could even get across. Finally, on the wooded heights above Fredericksburg, Lee and Burnside clashed on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1862. Long double lines of Union infantry tried six times to break the Confederate line by using frontal assaults across open ground. Burnside refused to attack Lee's flanks through the woods and stayed in the open. Each time the Union troops advanced they would be mowed down by a withering fire from entrenched infantry and deadly Confederate artil-

lery. Heaps of dead and wounded soldiers began to pile up. Finally a brief truce was called in this senseless slaughter so that the dead could be buried and the wounded dragged off the field.

An eye-witness account of the scene would be enough to convince any "summer patriots or sunshine soldiers" that this was no place for them.

Eleven hundred dead bodies...swollen to twice the natural size—black as Negroes in most cases—lying in every conceivable posture—some on their backs with gaping jaws— some with eyes large as walnuts, protruding with glassy stare —some doubled up like a contortionist— here one without a head—there one without legs—yonder a head and legs without a trunk—everywhere horrible expressions—fear, rage, agony, madness, torture—lying in pools of blood—lying with heads half buried in mud—with fragments of shell sticking in the oozing brain—with bullet holes all over the puffed limbs.

Burnside's gross incompetence had cost the Army of the Potomac 12,653 men. The press had a field day. They not only lambasted Burnside for masterminding the slaughter, but also Lincoln for appointing him. Lincoln never wavered.

These illustrations have been included to add perspective to the theory that large numbers of Canadians volunteered solely for money. The contention of this writer is that they did in fact take the money, as did their American counterparts, but it may not have been the major motivational factor. Even \$700 (equivalent to about \$25,000 today) is not enough to get a man to risk his life. The horrific stories of death, dismemberment and disease would probably have been enough to keep a young man sawing lumber in Fredericton if money were his only motivation.

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It is clear that there were other significant factors. Not least of these was a sense of adventure. While times were good in Canada they were not necessarily exciting. Many are said to have gone for the excitement, as did many young Americans. When war first broke out there was jubilation and celebrating all across the United States and to some degree in Canada. As J.E. Collins points out in his *Life and Times of Sir John A. MacDonal*d, "...it seemed as if we were anxious in Canada for a little war, just for exercise or recreation." Some claim it was one of those times in history when only a major bloodletting would clear the air. Whatever the case, there is strong evidence to suggest that many Canadian boys could not resist the call of the fife and drum bands and went off for "the adventure of their lives and the experience of a generation."

Two other factors are also worthy of consideration. One of them is the Emancipation Proclamation of September 1862. President Lincoln informed his cabinet that he had made "a covenant with God" that as soon as the Confederates were driven out of Maryland he would free the slaves. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1863 all slaves within the Confederacy were to be "thenceforth, and forever free."

The great Proclamation had mixed effects. The press in both Canada and the United States were very critical, viewing it as little more than a political ploy. However, this cynicism does not seem to have percolated down to the masses. The common people, who were overwhelmingly against slavery, seemed to take renewed interest in the Union cause. It became somewhat of a crusade with a lofty principle beyond simply preserving the Union. The liberal element in Europe hailed it with great public fanfare. Lincoln became a hero. Pro-Union meetings were held in cities across England with one meeting attracting over 6,000 working people. At this particular meeting, held in Manchester,

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they wrote a letter of support to the President in which they expressed their "...high admiration of your firmness in upholding the proclamation of freedom." Lincoln responded with a warm reply: "I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the working men at Manchester, and in all Europe are called to endure in this crisis...whatever misfortune may behold your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exists between the two nations will be, as it should be my desire to make them, perpetual." No European power would now dare intervene on the part of the Confederacy.

The Emancipation Proclamation was talked about in farm kitchens and public places all across Canada. It was also the topic of many sermons. But did it send Canadian boys across the border to enlist? This writer believes it did. Maybe not immediately; but as its full significance became clear, more Canadians wore blue uniforms.

A personal perspective on Canadian sentiment toward the war is to be found in the following speech given in Detroit in 1865 by the Hon. Joseph Howe, former Premier of Nova Scotia. The famous Canadian statesman also refutes those who, at the time, claimed Canada was largely pro-Confederate.

The sympathy expressed for the South ought to be well balanced by the young men whom you have drawn from the colonies into this conflict. For one ton of goods sent to the Southerners, and for one young man sent to aid their cause, we have sent fifty tons of goods and fifty able-bodied soldiers to the North. The people of the Provinces might lay the charge against you of having seduced their young men away from their homes, and left their bodies bleaching on Southern plains or rotting in Southern prisons. Only a short time ago I met no less

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than thirty British Americans going home in a single vessel, after having served three years in the war, and having left scores of their companions behind to enrich the soil. At Washington I met with a brave nephew of one of my late colleagues in the Legislature of Nova Scotia, who held the rank of lieutenant in a Massachusetts regiment, with only one leg to take him back to his home instead of two. I met another veteran from my Province, who had fought in twenty battles and was on his way home. In my own family and person I have suffered not a little by this unhappy rebellion. I have five boys, and one of them took it into his head to enter your army. He has now been for nearly two years in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Regiment and has fought in all the battles in which that regiment has been engaged during that period. He was in both the great battles under Sheridan, in which Early's forces were scattered and the Shenandoah Valley cleared. All the personal benefit that I have derived from the Reciprocity Treaty, or hope to derive from its renewal, will never compensate me or that boy's mother for the anxiety we have had with regard to him; but when he produced the certificates to his commanding officers, showing that he had conducted himself like a gentleman, and had been faithful and brave, it was some consolation for all our anguish to know that he had performed his duty. [Enthusiastic applause, during which the speaker's feelings nearly overcame him; as this subsided, a gentleman proposed "Three cheers for the boy!" which were given with great vivacity.]

There were also political issues involved. The extent to which these influenced the fighting men is difficult to ascertain. Certainly many joined the Confederacy because they believed in "states rights" and that the Southern way of life should be preserved. There were, and are, certain similarities between the

Southern states and the Maritime provinces, and to a lesser degree Ontario. Daniel Hundley's description of the Southern Gentleman would, with slight modification, fit many Maritimers of that period; and to some extent our current one as well.

But of all things, he is most enamoured of politics and the Army; and it is owing to this cause, that the South has furnished us with all our great generals, from Washington to Scott, as well as most of our leading statesmen, from Jefferson to Calhoun.... No matter what may be the Southern Gentleman's avocation, his dearest affections usually centre in the country. He longs to live as his fathers lived before him, in both the Old World and the New; and he ever turns with unfeigned delight from the bustle of cities, the hollow ceremonies of courts, the turmoil of politics, the glories and dangers of the battle-field, or the wearisome treadmill of professional routine, to the quiet and peaceful scenes of country life. ... The old hall, the familiar voices of old friends, the trusty and well remembered faces of the old domestics—these all are dearer to the heart of the Southern Gentleman than the short-lived plaudits of admiring throngs, or the hollow and unsatisfactory pleasures of sense.

Politics, the military and a pastoral way of life have always been integral elements in the Maritime life-style.

From a Northern perspective there were other elements of similarity. Canadians could identify with the Americans' love of liberty and their view of the rule of law and the supremacy of the Constitution. No nation has had more wrangles over its Constitution than Canada. Both nations, it must be remembered, were once colonies of Great Britain. As such the basis of their political and judicial systems are the Magna Carta and the British tra-

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dition of liberty stemming from the Common Law. The extent to which these more esoteric considerations affected Canadian enlistment is impossible to determine. What can be said with certainty is that as the war progressed it became more and more identified with the preservation of freedom and democracy. Many Canadians had come to realize that should the Union be dissolved these principles could be in jeopardy.

An event which took place in 1863 was to cement these issues in the collective conscience of Canadians and Americans—if not the whole world. On a sombre late autumn day, November 19<sup>th</sup> 1863 President Lincoln delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address. At the national cemetery he outlined the real issues in words that will always be with us. The speech is quoted here in its entirety because many in this present generation have, unfortunately, never heard it.

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say

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here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

That this now famous speech affected Canadian enlistment is beyond doubt.





## VI

### Crimpers and Skedaddlers

HAVING CONSIDERED BRIEFLY a few of the reasons why Canadians joined the Civil War, let us now look at recruitment factors. "Crimpers," as recruiting agents were called, from both sides of the conflict were active in Canada from the beginning of the war, even though it was illegal to recruit or be recruited in Canada. England and Canada wanted to maintain strict neutrality, but this did not seem to slow down recruitment efforts.

A typical "crimping" scenario would have been as follows. A young man or Canadian militia member would be approached on the street or in a tavern and offered free drinks. Once he had had a few the crimper would sound him out regarding his views of the war. If he seemed favourable the crimper would offer money and free passage to an enlistment centre. Usually the new recruit would be given part of the money on the spot and the rest when he signed up. Saint John, "a place filled with taverns and whorehouses," was a favourite haunt for crimpers. So too were Fredericton and Woodstock. The latter being only a few miles from the border, recruits could easily be escorted into Houlton. It is not known how many Canadians were "crimped" into the armies in this fashion. Crimping was often a "pernicious thing" in that men were literally forced or tricked into service.

Crimping and recruitment efforts increased dramatically after conscription legislation failed to get the required number of enlistments. The draft was particularly unsuccessful in the state

of Maine. After new legislation was enacted during the summer of 1863, for example, only 807 Maine residents enlisted. Twice as many provided substitutes and even more paid the three hundred dollar commutation fee. By years end a recruit from New Brunswick, or elsewhere in Canada, could receive up to \$700 to join one of the Maine regiments.

The legislation not only attracted conscripts but also caused an exodus as well. Thousands of draft dodgers, called "skedad-dlers" at the time, began pouring into Canada. Historian, Fred Landon, summarizes the situation as follows:

The draft policy adopted in the summer of 1862 set in motion a second current of migration that aroused as bitter comment in the United States as the first had caused in Canada. Draft dodgers were soon dubbed "skedad-dlers" because of the unanimity with which they sought to put themselves out of the reach of the provost marshal by flight across the boundary. Every subsequent order of conscription provoked another wave in the current and in the public mind the fugitives were classed along with actual military deserters who also took refuge outside the jurisdiction of the government at Washington. Desertion and draft dodging were noticeably prevalent in the border states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Wisconsin, and Minnesota; and the streets of Montreal, Windsor, and Amherstburg swarmed with these temporary, and in many cases undesirable, residents. ... A few of the refugees were able to buy or rent farms, but the majority, even of those who had passed through the customhouse, had no baggage but a half-filled carpetbag, and it was suspected that the much greater number who came in surreptitiously possessed even less. By 1863, and to a more marked degree in 1864, skedad-dlers and deserters

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were so numerous and so uniformly spread throughout the central and western parts of the province of Canada that reports ran that native workers found it difficult to compete with them in wage jobs and that farmers could obtain all the helpers they wanted by promising nothing but shelter and board.

In New Brunswick whole squatter communities sprang up, with most of the new residents being from Maine. This writer has visited the site of one of those communities.

The excursion took place on a beautiful fall afternoon in 1960. I was in Grade 6 at the time. On this particular day, my father, who was the district forest ranger in Bristol, near the Maine border, allowed me to go with him on patrol. We drove a few miles back of Bristol and parked the jeep up in the hill country. From there we began to walk up an old road that wound along "Skedaddle Ridge." We had gone about half a mile when dad headed toward some stones that were about twenty feet apart. I followed him. Here, he explained, were the corner stones of a skedaddler family's cabin. He went on to explain how families had come, often in the night, across the border from Maine to avoid being drafted into the army. Many of these families were poor people who could not pay the commutation fee or afford to hire substitutes.

Dad sat down on one of the stones and began to tell me all about the "war between the states." Sitting beside him I listened in amazement. Dad told of the great battles, the thousands slain and about slaves in the old South. I asked questions and he answered them. Dad was widely read and told the story well. He finished by telling me all about Abraham Lincoln and what a great man he was. (Those stories have never left me. When I got

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my first office I had the 1860 Brady picture of Lincoln professionally framed and hung it over my desk. It still hangs there.)

When dad had finished his story we moved on a short distance to a clearing under some big maples. Here were five little stones in a row. "These are grave markers," he said. "During that first winter a man, his wife and four little girls lived in that cabin. The winter was severe, food was scarce and disease rampant. The children began to get weak and die. As the children died, one by one, the man put them in little wooden coffins and set them out in the snow. By spring all four were dead. Then their mother died and the man built a coffin for her. When the ground thawed in the spring he and some other men dug graves and buried them right here where we stand. These first four stones are for the little girls and that one," he pointed, "is for their mother." We walked on. I still remember the tears running down my cheeks and onto my cotton jacket.

While it is true that there were thousands of draft dodgers who hid in Canada during the war and desertions averaged about twenty-one percent, most of the men who did serve, both Canadian and American, were of the highest quality. Good solid fighting men. The ones that fled seemed to feel that the shame of cowardice was easier to bear than the horror of battle. And one can, with little difficulty, understand how a man might wish to absent himself from the war. It took a lot of courage to face a line of men whose sole ambition was to ventilate your carcass with a big piece of hot lead. Many people simply could not face this prospect. Others were not committed to the cause on either side and felt the war was pointless.

Another side effect of the draft was desertion by British soldiers garrisoned in Canada. The recruiters even got to these stalwarts of the Crown. Her Majesty's Government in England was not amused. At one time nine soldiers deserted from the 15<sup>th</sup>

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Regiment stationed in Fredericton. They were apprehended in Oromocto, but that did not stem the flow. The excuse was made by their superiors that deserters were "...representatives of the British lower classes, often radical in sentiment, or influenced by radical speakers who favoured the North."

And what was the New Brunswick government's response? Minimal. Fines remained low and enforcement half-hearted. It seems that the provincial government was willing to turn a blind eye.

The editor of the *News* recorded meeting a British deserter in Eastport, Maine. The man had gone missing during the winter from a regiment stationed in Saint John. He was now in American uniform and receiving "good pay" as a recruiting sergeant. He was also a member of an Eastport church. This suggested to the editor that the man had a "bad conscience."

Once the Canadian boys signed up they joined their American neighbours in the various army camps. Here they often found conditions a little less comfortable than the recruiters had led them to believe. While Uncle Sam was generous he could also be tough.

Most of the men who volunteered had little, if any, military experience. No wars had been fought in their lifetime. Some would have had a bit of military training from the "sedentary" militia, but not much. Almost all would have been trained to some extent in the use of firearms since most people hunted game at that time. The first thing the army had to do was take these raw recruits from the wilds of Canada and turn them into fighting men. They began by giving them a uniform, a rifle and a bed roll. Then it was out of bed at 5 A.M. to the sound of a bugle. On the parade ground before dawn they fell into their place in line. They often looked ridiculous, not having had time to get fully dressed. And they felt ridiculous. Before breakfast

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they drilled, and after breakfast they drilled, and then they drilled some more. For boys who were used to working on a farm or in the woods, getting up early was no problem, but they detested drilling for hours in the art of war. City boys found military life particularly difficult since they were accustomed to a less arduous life-style. They did, however, survive camp diseases much better than country boys because they had been exposed to many of the common diseases such as measles, mumps and chicken pox. While causing only a brief illness in children, these maladies killed thousands of Civil War soldiers.

Along with the drill soldiers also did sanitation duty and other domestic type chores to keep the camp clean. The boys detested camp chores and circumvented them whenever possible. One particular group flatly refused, when ordered by their captain, to clean up the camp. Military discipline being very difficult to enforce during the early months of the war, the captain was forced to call upon the colonel for help. The colonel came down in person and repeated the captain's order. Again they refused telling the colonel in no uncertain terms that they joined the army to fight, not become housemaids. After listening to "a barrage of coarse and vulgar language" regarding soldiers and camp duty, the colonel walked away. His name was Ulysses Simpson Grant.

There was also guard duty—possibly the most boring duty of all. Long hours of trying to stay awake with nothing to do but swat mosquitoes.

Regimental drill in the afternoon was aimed at welding the men into a single cohesive unit that would follow their commander's orders instinctively and without hesitation. Included in this time was bayonet training. Each soldier had to master the basic manoeuvres for using this eighteen inch (or longer) piece of sharp steel at the end of his rifle. These were rarely, however,

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used in actual battle. It is said that both sides were so afraid of the bayonet that they refused to use them because the other side might do likewise. Bayonet training was apparently quite tedious. One young man said the results looked like "a line of beings made up about equally of the frog, the sandhill crane, the sentinel crab, and the grasshopper; all of them rapidly jumping, thrusting, swinging, striking, jerking every which way, and all gone stark mad."

Soldiers spent much more time in camp than they did anywhere else. A few days in battle meant weeks in camp waiting for the next encounter. This sometimes stretched into months. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Ohio regiment were in camp so long that they built martin houses out of cracker boxes and had them full of martins. Forever after they were known as the "Martin Box Regiment." In all likelihood the Canadian boys were initially ill prepared for camp life. The recruiters had painted a much more glorious picture of military life than the reality of it turned out to be. Visions of dashing soldiers in blue or grey going out to vanquish the foes of freedom turned, in reality, into long periods of drudgery.

But not all about camp life was bad. The soldiers went out of their way to make their tents a "home away from home." They put logs around the walls, straw under their beds and rigged up candle holders. They fashioned writing desks and chairs out of ammunition crates. Best of all they organized games and entertainment. Some soldiers, in later years, claimed that some of their most cherished memories were of camp life. The card games, the music and, of course, the practical jokes were to be fondly remembered. Canadian boys joined in the rowdiness and were as quick to play a prank as were their American compatriots.

They also enjoyed the music and brought much of it back to Canada. Alex Nickerson, who has researched this topic, claims

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that in the early years of this century, at gatherings of the Grand Army of the Republic and its Southern counterpart, the Confederate Army, veterans sang the old songs. The civil war inspired many songs that moved north with the returning soldiers and were kept alive by the aforementioned gatherings. By the 1890s these songs were to be found in popular songbooks throughout Canada.

Many of the songs were highly sentimental. "Home Sweet Home" was banned from the Union camps during the winter of 1862. Spirits were depressed enough after the thrashing they received at Fredericksburg. Another Civil War song that can still cause brave eyes to cloud is "Just Before The Battle Mother."

## Just Before the Battle, Mother

*An early, sentimental war song which, like "Tenting Tonight,"  
was sung by Civil War soldiers of both sides.*

Freely Words and Music by G. F. Root

The musical score is written in G major and 2/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score includes two systems of music. The first system contains the first two lines of the song, with two verses of lyrics. The second system contains the final two lines of the song, with lyrics. Performance markings include 'mp' (mezzo-piano), 'foco rit.' (foco ritardando), and 'a tempo'. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The piano part has a consistent eighth-note accompaniment throughout.

1. Just be-fore the bat-tle, Moth-er,  
2. Hark! I hear the bu-gle call-ing,

I am think-ing most of you; While up-on the field we're  
'Tis the sig-nal for the fight; Now may God pro-tect us,



watch-ing, With the en - e - my in view.  
Moth - er, As He ev - er does the right.

The first system of music features a vocal line in G major with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The melody starts on G4, moves to A4, then B4, and ends on G4. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Chord symbols G, D7, and G are placed above the vocal line.

Com - - rades brave are 'round me ly - ing,  
I hear the "Bat - tle Cry of Free - dom"

The second system continues the melody. The vocal line starts on G4, moves to A4, then B4, and ends on G4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. Chord symbols C and G are placed above the vocal line.

Filled with thoughts of home and God; For well they know that on the  
How it swells up-on the air! Oh yes, we'll ral - ly 'round the

The third system continues the melody. The vocal line starts on G4, moves to A4, then B4, and ends on G4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. Chord symbols D, A7, D7, and G are placed above the vocal line.

mor - row stand - ard, Some will sleep be - neath the sod.  
Or we'll per - ish no - bly there.

The fourth system concludes the melody. The vocal line starts on G4, moves to A4, then B4, and ends on G4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. Chord symbols C, D7, and G are placed above the vocal line.

Chorus

Fare - - well, Moth - er, you may nev - er.

Press me to your heart a - gain; But oh, you'll not for-get me,

Moth - er, If I'm num-bered with the slain.

Many a Canadian mother never got to press her boy to her heart again. They lay at Arlington, Gettysburg, Antietam or Andersonville. Some mothers and wives went to their graves not knowing what became of their sons or husbands. Their only explanation was that he didn't come back from the war.

Not all the songs were mournful of course. Some were stirring, inspiring tunes. "The Battle Cry of Freedom," "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Boys are Marching" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" will stir the blood at anytime. This latter tune was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1862. Sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body" it became immediately popular in both the United States and Canada. Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the song, was visiting the big army camps near Washington when she was inspired to pen those immortal lyrics.





## VII

### Heroes of the Hill

**A** LONG WITH GREAT SONGS the soldiers also brought great war stories back to Canada. Tales of long marches, nights on picket duty, narrow escapes and violent battles. While this work is intended to deal generally with Canadian involvement in the Civil War, there is, however, one great battle story that will be used to illustrate the bravery of Civil War soldiers. The story of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteers at Little Round Top.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the bloodiest and the most famous battle of the Civil War. It was comprised of several individual battles fought over a three day period and Little Round Top was one of the most important of these. Had the Confederates taken Little Round Top, Gettysburg may have been a Southern rather than a Northern victory.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was virtually out of ammunition when the Confederates attacked again. Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain, their commander, had to make a quick and difficult decision. Stage an all out bayonet charge directly into the attacking Confederates or retreat. After briefly conferring with his officers he chose to charge. The Colonel had been told to hold his position at all cost. The order to "fix bayonets" was issued. But could the men do it? They were hot, thirsty and tired. Would they do it? Charging into a hail of bullets with only a bayonet takes a lot of courage. The crucial moment came. Fate hung in the balance. There was no hesitation. With a mighty roar the Maine Yankees came out over their breastworks like a swarm of angry hornets. The

Confederates fired; men fell; but the swarm never faltered. Running down hill full tilt with bayonets outstretched the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine presented a spectacular sight. One the Confederates never forgot. Great soldiers though they were, the Southern boys turned and ran like scared rabbits.

Had the Confederates been able to prevail at Little Round Top the Battle of Gettysburg may have been lost. By holding Little Round Top the 386 boys from the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine played an integral part in securing the Union victory. But at great loss to themselves. Scattered about the wooded hillside were 40 dead and 130 wounded men who had come from communities all over south central Maine.

But not just Maine. When the battle cry was sounded and blue coated men charged into the Confederate musket fire with their bayonets, among them were New Brunswickers. Two of them would never see the "Picture Province" again. They had given their "last full measure" in the cause of freedom. George Leach from Fredericton was seriously wounded and died later in a Confederate prison. Alex E. Lester, from Saint John, lay with the dead on a small hill that would forever be enshrined in history. Little Round Top will be a symbol of sacrifice and bravery forever.

Silence did not come with the darkness at Gettysburg. The guns were quiet but "...a constant, agonizing chorus of cries from the helpless wounded men filled the moonlit night; thousands upon thousands of maimed lay in the field and woods and on the rocky knolls, all the way from Round Top and the wheat field around to Culp's Hill." Some died of thirst during the night and others simply bled to death. Many lay in chronic pain for hours upon endless hours. A significant number of them were Canadian.

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One notable soldier who suffered serious wounds in the war was Fred Howe, son of the aforementioned Joseph Howe. He is said to have "...served well in Virginia and Maryland before being seriously wounded." Thousands of Nova Scotians served in Maine and New England regiments. Ten thousand is the number often quoted. So many Nova Scotians and Cape Bretoners were serving in one of the Massachusetts regiments it became known as the "Highlanders." These men were undoubtedly some of the best fighting men of the war. Descendants of the highland Scots who came to Canada after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, they were known all over the world as rough, tough hard-fighting soldiers. Whenever the British army had need of top quality troops they called upon the Highlanders. Now these Canadian Scots were fighting for Uncle Sam.







## VIII

### A Bluenoser in Washington

**T**HE HON. MR. HOWE went to Washington in the fall of 1863 on business and in hopes of finding his son. He kept a diary of the trip complete with a first-hand description of the capitol in war time.

On his first day in the city he met Secretary Seward who made arrangements for him to meet with President Lincoln the next morning. According to his biographer, James A. Roy, "Mr. Lincoln received him kindly and chatted with him for about twenty minutes. Howe found him 'like and yet unlike his photographs, taller than I thought, something of the Jackson cut about him— frank and affable, a good man struggling with the storms of fate ... crossing the current.' "

Washington in war time both "fascinated and depressed" Mr. Howe. He made a somewhat extensive tour through the camps in the hope of learning of his son's whereabouts, the American War Department having been unable, apparently, to offer him much assistance. After attending the Presbyterian Church on Sunday to see the President, Mr. Howe drove round the camps, where he encountered many sad sights. Arlington Heights was crowned with fortifications and scarred with rifle pits. Soldiers were everywhere; some on duty; others lounging about the barracks or under the trees; others at church, where their singing sounded strange under the circumstances.

General Lee's estate, as described by Mr. Howe, presented a melancholy sight:

Fancy General Lee's beautiful estate just opposite Washington being Head Quarters of the army to which he is opposed, its park trees levelled and burnt, its fences down, pictures and books scattered and stolen, his cattle and sheep killed and eaten, and all that cheered and embellished life for a century, desecrated or destroyed.... All this is very sad, but the ludicrous is so mixed up with it all that you cannot help laughing every now and then. Fancy a new branch of business advertised in this fashion; "Dead bodies embalmed here in the very best style." Fancy a Kentucky rifleman eyeing a sentinel from a distance and exclaiming, "About my size. I think his boots will fit," when "pop goes the rifle" and the boots are transferred.

Howe described the city of Washington as one huge military camp. Society was dislocated and out of joint. "Military surveillance, reserve, distrust were everywhere." Typically he found a certain grim humour amidst all the tragedy, and he could not resist copying an epitaph which he saw inscribed on a plain wooden slab over a Federal soldier's grave, in a Virginia churchyard.

*The northern hordes with sullied hands  
Came southwards to invade our lands  
This narrow and contracted spot  
Was all that that poor Yankee got.*

A polite Canadian doctor conducted him through one of the hospitals, and he was impressed by its cleanliness. But the death rate was terribly high, as many as four or five wounded men dying every day. The dead were moved a short distance and buried in the churchyard under wooden slabs. That night he was

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wakened by the “dull rumble of the wheels of the ambulances,” which “creaked and groaned” past his window for four hours, bringing in sick and wounded from the battlefield. His reflections on that time were recorded in his diary.

God help our poor fellows who may have to be jolted for twenty miles over heavy roads in these mournful-looking wagons...while the weather is so hot that I can hardly wear coat or waistcoat.... War looks pleasant in a garrison town—a fine Regiment, perfect in discipline and equipment, marching to the sound of merry music, with tattered banners unfolding to the sun. The record of battles that we have read of but never seen, is a pretty sight. The funeral of a solitary soldier who dies like other people when his time comes, is an improvement upon civic funerals. There are the solemn dead march—the sad soldier faces touched with regret that a brave spirit has passed from their midst—the measured tread of perfect discipline almost making music, the cap and side arms on the coffin—the solemn prayers and then the three volleys, (sic) the soldier’s short and sharp funeral oration and the Regimental mourning is over and to the sound of merry music the companies march home, prepared to wash their faces and eat bread like the sensible king of old, while civilians have to wear heavy black clothing and mourning weeds for a year or two, all of which gives the soldier, in the matter of death in a garrison town, a very decided advantage over the civilians. But, to be shot down by thousands by persons you never saw and cannot personally hate—to be tumbled into holes and trenches, hastily dug and as hastily abandoned—to be left on the battlefield till the ravens pluck out eyes and wild beasts tear the flesh—to be wounded and left upon the field...till heat and thirst...aggravate what the bullet and the bayonet

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[did]...to be picked up, jolted to a hospital in the rear...for twenty miles to Washington....

Having completed his round of calls, official and unofficial, and made himself conversant with the American situation and with his own official business, Howe set off for Baltimore. Soldiers were stationed all along the line and guarding all the bridges. In Baltimore excited crowds were reading telegrams in front of the newspaper offices, the news having been circulated that Lee was advancing and Hooker falling back. Next morning Mr. Howe went to Headquarters but apparently got no satisfaction as to the whereabouts of his son. He saw there, however, a number of Confederate prisoners of war; "fine young fellows in grey uniforms, with brass spurs, who looked at their Federal guards and their drawn bayonets with supreme contempt." In Philadelphia the war excitement was at fever pitch. The Confederate army was reported to be within fifteen miles of the city. "Drums were beating from morning till night; troops were drilling and marching; recruits, black and white, were mustering at their quarters; Union flags were flying all over the city." One wounded soldier of a Massachusetts Regiment, with whom he spoke, informed him that his battalion had been reduced from 1,050 to 93.

In the beginning of January 1864, Howe was back in the United States. He had an excellent time in Philadelphia. He went to theatres and concerts, dined with Samuel Cunard, attended an evening party at Judge Daly's (whose wife was very like Marie Antoinette) visited Barnum's, where he saw pugilists and wrestlers, and wrote comic verses on the giantess. From Philadelphia he went to Boston, where he had his last dinner with his old friend Larry O'Connor Doyle, heard Everett speak, and Whipple deliver a lecture on Thackeray. He also heard

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Oliver Wendell Holmes in the classroom, and dined with him at the Literary Club, his friend Emerson and "a lot of other literary social notabilities" being also of the company. This writer could find no record of Mr. Howe having ever made contact with his son.





## IX

### Canadian Yankees & Rebels

**D**URING 1863 and thereafter Canadians became very much in demand. Conscription efforts had failed to get the required number of enlistments. "Skeddaddlers" were crossing into Canada by the thousands and others were buying their way out of service. Another complicating factor was that many recruits netted by the draft or "recruited" were of poor quality. Recruiters were paid a commission for each person they could persuade to enlist and some, being greedy, stooped to some very unsavoury practices. They took those who were mentally and physically impaired as well as outright criminals. It was said that "...the weak, the diseased, the feeble-minded, the scum of the slums...the rakings of rural alehouses and the never-do-wells of villages" were all selected for service. A Confederate sergeant said that "some of them looked like they had been resurrected from the grave, after laying therein for twenty years or more."

In comparison to the typical "soldier" being recruited elsewhere Canadian recruits and volunteers seem to have been generally of good quality. A large number of French-Canadians served in the Civil War alongside their English-speaking countrymen. Black-Canadians were known as outstanding soldiers wherever they served. Three Black men from Ontario were killed during the famous attack on Fort Wagner, South Carolina, July 18<sup>th</sup> 1863 while serving with the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry, the North's first Black regiment. Irish immigrant

recruits were said to have been among the most courageous soldiers in the war. Many of them came from Canada.

For the most part Canadian recruits were farm fresh country boys and young lumberjacks. They fitted in easily with Americans from both the North and the South. Coming from the same stock they had much in common, including family ties in some cases. Men from the Canadian provinces served in over 250 Union regiments and in about 50 on the Confederate side. This means that in many battles Canadians were fighting Canadians. There is every indication that during Pickett's famous charge at Gettysburg, Yankee New Brunswickers from the Fredericton and Woodstock areas shot at, and possibly killed, Confederate New Brunswickers from the Saint John area. At no other time in our history has this happened.

Canadians apparently fought well. Many became officers and four were promoted to the rank of brigadier general. Twenty-nine Canadians were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery. Four of these were from New Brunswick: John Chapman, Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Heavy Artillery; Robert J. Coffey, Sgt. 4<sup>th</sup> Vermont Infantry; Stephen O'Neill, Cpl. 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry; George G. Worman, Sgt. U.S. Cavalry.

While only a few Canadians became heroes during the Civil War there are plenty of interesting stories of ordinary fighting men. Valuable contributions regarding Civil War ancestors were received from generous people in New Brunswick, Maine and other parts of Canada. Daniel Johnson, a Certified Genealogist, also made available his extensive collection of nineteenth century information. Following are a few samples from material that was received.

William Forster was a telegraph operator in New York City at the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States. Having been

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sent with others on the expedition to tap the rebel wires between Charleston and Savannah, he was in communication with the Southern main army for five hours, taking quite a number of very important messages to the commanding general of the Northern army. He was then captured by the rebels and sent to Columbia, S.C. and from there to the prison at Andersonville, Georgia, where after ten months confinement he died of starvation, a young man and unmarried.

Capt. Glen Leland of Mascarene writes that "...one of my great grandfathers served in ... the 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Regiment and eventually became Sergeant. ...born in Annapolis County, Nova Scotia he was working in Hancock County, Maine and joined the Union Army. He contracted malaria while serving in Louisiana and died in Albany, New York 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1863 on his way home and was buried in Albany with the 'Soldiers of the Nations.' "

Tom Whalen, great, great uncle of Terry Whalen of Newcastle, New Brunswick, left "to take part" in the Civil War. "My great grandfather never heard from him after that." This is not unusual. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Canadians were never heard from again after they left for the war. Uncle Tom probably lies in an unmarked grave at one of the great battlefields. May he rest in peace.

Clarence Johnston of Fredericton tells us that his great grandfather, James Johnston, had four brothers who were "all killed in the American Civil War."

From Sherman Station, Maine, Dorothy Marble writes that, "My great uncle, Sylvester Rideout, who was born in Florenceville, New Brunswick, fought with the 15<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry for four years. He was badly wounded and spent time in a hospital."

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Also from Maine, was received an interesting letter from Leigh Cummings, Jr. of Houlton. His third great grandfather, Oliver Ackerley Cole, served with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Maine Infantry. Oliver's grandfather was David Cole, for whom Coles Island, New Brunswick is named. As Mr. Cummings points out, "It's interesting to note the number of grandsons of Loyalists who fought to preserve the very union the creation of which their grandfathers fought against." A very good point indeed.

Probably a reasonable explanation of this phenomenon is that Loyalists, who were still Americans, continued to evolve along political lines similar to their Patriot kinfolk who remained in the United States. Canada, for example, in spite of her British connection, has become more American than British. The new Canadian constitution of 1982 resembles that of the United States much more than it does the English constitution. It is basically an Americanized version of the British North America Act which it replaces. The preamble and Charter of Rights and Freedoms clearly reflect the thinking of Thomas Jefferson. It seems as if the Hon. Pierre Trudeau, architect of the document, borrowed all he dared from its American counterpart.

By the 1860s ordinary Canadians, many of whom had come to see the benefits of popular democracy, could with clear conscience risk their lives to support the Union. True "Tories," as mentioned earlier, remained staunchly pro-Confederate throughout the war. They were in the minority, however, and this may help to explain why about forty-nine thousand Canadians served in the Union forces and only about fifteen hundred served with those of the Confederacy.

Another place that Canadians and Americans went together was to prison. Prisons in both the North and the South were terrible places, but Andersonville prison in Georgia was by far the worst.

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Andersonville prison was hastily constructed in the spring of 1864 to handle the surplus of prisoners being sent from the other Confederate prisons. Originally called Camp Sumter, this stockade type prison provided no shelter for the men except what they could sling together out of old blankets and other bits of material. These "shebangs" were rough mini-tents with barely room enough for one person. Built on a twenty-six acre space to hold 10,000 men it eventually held more than 33,000. This meant that each inmate had a space four feet by six feet; about the size of a grave.

The suffering at Andersonville, like Auschwitz in a later period, literally defies adequate description. Built from Georgia pine logs placed vertically with about ten feet sticking above ground, it formed a more or less rectangular enclosure much like a frontier fort. At specific intervals there were guard posts. Inside the walls and back a few feet there was a line called the "dead line." If a prisoner crossed this line he was shot dead, which under the circumstances may have been a blessing. The ends of the stockade were on little knolls which sloped toward the centre where there was a small stream. This sluggish little trickle served as drinking water, garbage dump and the latrine for about 33,000 men. Insects bred by the jillions making life even worse for the captives. The food, what there was of it, was on a par with pig swill. It usually arrived rotten and infested with insect larvae. Bad food, putrid water and endless hours of boredom destroyed the men's health.

Surgeon Joseph Jones wrote that "from the crowded conditions, filthy habits, bad diet and dejected, depressed condition of the prisoners, their systems had become so disordered that the smallest abrasion of the skin, from the rubbing of a shoe, or from the effects of the sun, the prick of a splinter or the scratching of a mosquito bite, in some cases took on a rapid and fright-

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ful ulceration and gangrene." Once they became very ill men were taken outside the stockade to be treated. This was often their last time in the land of the living. Medical supplies were almost non-existent because they were needed at the front. Having no disinfectant, wounds were often bathed with dirty water which only provided more breeding ground for insects. House flies crawled all over the patients laying eggs in their wounds and open sores. It is said that many men went mad because of the intense pain from maggots eating away at their infected flesh.

Several Canadians are known to have died in these hellish conditions at Andersonville. They lie with the thousands of other men who are buried at Andersonville prison. Today the prison is a beautiful national park. Acres of graves are marked with little white tombstones that lie beneath big oak trees. The prison has been partially reconstructed and Andersonville town has been preserved in its 1865 condition. This area is an important historic site and well worth a visit. For those travelling by car to Florida it is not far out of the way.

Not all of the Canadians who were prisoners at Andersonville died. Following is the account of E.L. Stevens from Sackville, New Brunswick who lived until a ripe old age.

Mr. Stevens enlisted at Houlton, Maine in February 1863. He drilled with his regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Maine Veteran Volunteers, during the remainder of the winter and until the following June, when the journey for the seat of war commenced. During the time of the stay at Portland, occurred the audacious capture of a federal steamer by a small rebel cruise, which remaining in a sheltered position outside, sent boats full of men professing to be fishermen, who, finding the steamer deserted by all but two

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or three watchmen, asked and obtained permission to board her. They speedily made those on board prisoners and moved off with the ship. They were pursued and recovered by a revenue cutter manned by the whole regiment of Veteran Volunteers (including Mr. Stevens) and a great number of special volunteers. Thirty-seven rebels were brought ashore as prisoners and only one man was hurt in combat. There was about as much excitement and jubilation, so Mr. Stevens says, as if a fleet had been captured.

It was about midsummer when the seat of war was reached, but the Grand Army of the Potomac was not tearing things to pieces at that time. There was a little marching and counter-marching; there was crossing the Potomac on pontoons and some forced marches. The regiment took part in two or three skirmishes and finally went into winter quarters, the grand army being commanded by General Meade. In the spring they broke camp and on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness, E.L. Stevens found what genuine fighting was like. Late in the day after much rough work, the enemy came bounding over the breastwork behind which our hero stood. There was a confused thrusting and thumping and then went down Stevens with a blow in the face with the butt of a rifle. A few of his teeth are, as he showed our reporter, conspicuously absent. As soon as he knew anything he stood himself up to find a few rifles pointed at him and experienced the [un]comfortable feeling of a bead neatly drawn on him. He was invited to move to the rear, the muzzle of the rifle keeping him in company, in rather annoying proximity. The prisoners were moved from prison to prison until the 24<sup>th</sup> May when they encountered General Wirtz of the Andersonville Stockade. Here began the most bitter of his experience. In this

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enclosure of from twenty to thirty acres, there were shut at one time 36,000 prisoners.

The allowance of food was not sufficient to keep starvation away and the water was procured from a stream which ran through the Rebel's camp and brought the refuse down to poison the water. The death rate was as high during a part of the summer as 175 per day, besides those that the sentinels shot. Provisions could be procured from the people around who sold small potatoes for \$1.50 per dozen, melons for 25¢ a slice, eggs 35¢ each, etc. Flour could be bought at the rate of \$95 per cwt or nearly \$1 a pound.

Our friend was a practical man however and bound to make the most of things. The next development was E.L. Stevens as a baker. A spot was scraped clean down to the clay; it was levelled off and tested by pouring water on and watching its course. Then \$4 was invested in a stock of pine wood which was carefully split up and arch-roofed made, which was covered with more clay. After this the edifice was left until the sun had baked it, when the wood inside was set on fire and the result was a brick oven. Here the biscuits were produced at \$2.50 per dozen which were retailed at once for 25¢ a piece. It was thus Mr. Stevens kept himself alive, for he realized enough for his own need and came out with a few dollars. At Andersonville he remained until late in December, or about six months.

"I was finally let go and exchanged later, and before I was called upon to report again, the war was ended."

According to *The Chignecto Post*, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1881, Mr. Stevens, because of "a recent law," was about to receive "back

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allowance for about \$1,500 and in addition to that he will get \$8 a month for the remainder of his life." Mr. Stevens would have been about forty years old at this time.







## X

### Sharing the Honour

**I**N THE FALL OF 1864 the only attack from Canadian soil took place on the Vermont-Quebec border not far from Montreal. All parts of Canada had Southern refugees and spies at this time. Montreal probably had more than most.

Disguised as Canadian sportsmen, a group of young Confederate soldiers infiltrated the town of St. Albans, Vermont. Their leader promptly announced that the town was now part of the Confederacy and for some reason they proceeded to try and burn it down. Before the sheriff and his posse arrived the Confederates had also robbed the town's banks of about \$200,000. All but five of the dozen were captured inside Canadian territory and handed over to the local authorities. It is believed that Senator Clay of Alabama, a Confederate agent in Canada, may have organized the raid to cause trouble between Canada and the North. It almost succeeded. Congress nearly took belligerent action before they realized this was counterproductive and playing into a Confederate scheme. In the end President Lincoln interceded and calmed the waters. As usual cooler heads prevailed. Canada strengthened her border guard, the raiders were re-arrested (they had been discharged by a Montreal police magistrate) and the incident blew over. A positive result for the North was that the incident caused a major pro-Union reaction in Canada.

Canadians were involved in the Civil War until it ended at the tiny village of Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9<sup>th</sup>

1865. At the meeting between Lee and Grant in the McLean farmhouse it was decided that a formal surrender would take place on April 12<sup>th</sup>. At this ceremony two union brigades were positioned on either side of the road near Appomattox Court House. General Joshua L. Chamberlain, who commanded the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Gettysburg, was given the honour of accepting the official surrender because of his outstanding performance in this battle. General Gordon and the renowned Stonewall Brigade led the Confederates toward the Union lines. As they came into view a bugle sounded and General Chamberlain gave the order to "Carry Arms!" General Gordon, looking very crest fallen, gave Chamberlain the cavalry sword salute and ordered his men to "Carry Arms!" In hollow silence the Confederate units marched past their former foes. In a dignified and orderly manner the Southerners stacked their guns and cartridge boxes and laid down their much cherished battle flags. At this moment, overcome with grief, "...many broke ranks, and, sobbing, pressed the beloved colours to their lips."

At this formal surrender were thousands of men from all over Canada. One man, John McEacheron, was a member of General Grant's honour guard. Other Canadians who played an honourable role this day were the proud members of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment who had been with General Chamberlain at Gettysburg.

Men from the states and the provinces looked on in silence as long columns of ragged soldiers marched off into history. They then took their own place in history although for the Canadians this has been very obscure. Their participation in the American Civil War is recorded in very few places in either country. Even then it is limited to at best a brief mention. In secondary school history courses Canadian involvement in this great war is totally absent. It is hoped that this short monograph

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will help to give these brave men the honourable place in history that they rightfully deserve. Should this be the case our efforts will have been rewarded.

*Forgotten! Can it be a few swift rounds  
Of Time's great chariot wheels have crushed to naught  
The memory of those fearful sights and sounds,  
With speechless misery fraught—  
Wherethro' we hope to gain the Hesperian height,  
Where freedom smiles in light?*

*Forgotten! No! we cannot all forget,  
Or, when we do, farewell to Honor's face,  
To Hope's sweet tendance, Valor's unpaid debt,  
And every noblest Grace,  
Which, nursed in Love, might still benignly bloom  
Above a nation's tomb!*

— A.M. Tozer





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