

Very little employment of cavalry was made during the war for obvious reasons. It was hard to get, hard to maintain, and hard to employ in action to advantage. Most of the fighting was bush fighting, and under the primitive conditions of these days the loyal Indians were often better suited to perform necessary scouting and advance outpost duties than were cavalry. Still some very good and useful work was performed during the war by a few independent troops of dragoons or mounted rifles organized in the various threatened districts.

Only one regular cavalry regiment, the 19th Light Dragoons,* was in the country, but some of its squadrons were able to render valuable service at the most critical part of the war. These squadrons, with the troops of "Provincial Dragoons," appear to have been pretty well taxed with scouting, courier, and escort duties in the Niagara district during the progress of the war. But the whole number of mounted militiamen was small, for of a total of 7,286 militia actually enrolled in Upper and Lower Canada during the war, only 186 were cavalry.

Early in the war "provincial dragoons," though their numbers were few, began to be heard of, and in a gallant attempt to recover the brig "Detroit" from the enemy, above Squaw Island, October 9th, 1812, Major Pell of the Niagara Dragoons was mortally wounded.

The town of Newark, captured in May, 1813, by General Dearborn, remained all summer and autumn in the hands of the Americans. During this period many traitors, including Mallory and Wilcox, two former members of the Assembly, who had been expelled by Brock, returned to Newark. These men organized a troop of cavalry with themselves as principal officers, and filled up the ranks with such traitors as they could find in Canada, and a crowd of adventurers they recruited in Buffalo. They called themselves the "Canadian Volunteers." They were used in foraging expeditions, and as guides and scouts for the enemy, a duty they were well qualified to discharge, knowing the roads. They were charged with murdering loyal subjects in cold blood, and generally with marauding. So obnoxious did this corps of freebooters become that a troop of loyal Canadian volunteers was formed to put a stop to their operations. Captain William Hamilton Merritt, of St. Catharines, was appointed to the command of the troop.† He followed up the irregulars with persistent perseverance, literally dogging their steps, capturing many of them, and bringing them to trial and the halter. Captain Merritt's men entered with such zest into the discharge of their function of heading off Wilcox's men that at last the latter dared not venture out of the American lines. July 29th, 1814, seven of Wilcox's troopers were hanged at Ancaster by order of General Drummond, and eight more condemned to death were sent to Quebec to receive the penalty of their sentence. Five days later, at Lundy's Lane, the remnant of the corps was annihilated, and Wilcox was shot shortly afterwards near Fort Erie.

Major Lisle of the 19th Light Dragoons, under whose orders Captain W. H. Merritt's troop of Provincial Dragoons served from July, 1813, to December, 1814, stated that this corps "were at all times of the most essential service from their perfect knowledge of the country, and the zeal and bravery they always displayed in its defence.‡

Major Merritt, second in command of the Governor General's Body Guard, is a grandson of the gallant commanding officer of the old dragoon troop of the Niagara district.

* Now called the 19th Hussars. Were organized as Light Dragoons 1803, became Lancers in 1816, disbanded in 1821, revived as Hussars in 1861.

† Captain Merritt, of the St. Catharines' Dragoons, was a son of Major Thomas Merritt, who served in the Revolutionary War as a cornet in the Queen's Rangers (Simcoe's famous regiment). He commanded the cavalry in Upper Canada during the War of 1812, and collected the swords of the surrendered officers at Queens-
ton Heights. He was one of the pall-bearers at General Brock's funeral.

‡ Lieut.-Col. E. A. Cruikshank's History of the 13th Regiment of Infantry.