

This affair proved an incentive to a bolder and more important exploit.

Vincent's division at Burlington, encumbered with several thousand starving non-combatants, was suffering greatly from want of fresh provisions. On the 5th of December Lieutenant Henry Medcalf, of the Norfolk militia, was despatched from Dover with twelve volunteers from his company, and Sergeant Douglas and seven troopers of Coleman's Provincial Dragoons, in search of some cattle that were reported to be at Rondeau, rather more than a hundred miles away. Their line of march led right through the heart of the disaffected region. When the party arrived at Port Talbot, sixty-five miles on the road, it was joined by Lieutenant Rice and Ensign Wilson with seven men of the Middlesex militia. On reaching the Rondeau it was ascertained that they had been misinformed and that no cattle were to be obtained in that part of the country. While there, however, Medcalf learned that a detachment of American troops had taken post at McRae's house near Chatham, where they had been collecting supplies and were forcing the inhabitants to take an oath of neutrality. This party was correctly stated to consist of three officers and thirty-six men of one of the regiments of regular infantry in garrison at Detroit, under the command of a Lieutenant Larwill. Disliking to return empty-handed, Medcalf promptly determined to make a forced march upon their post and attempt its surprise. During that day and the next night his men marched sixty miles, much of the way through an unbroken and pathless forest; they purposely avoided the customary trails to escape discovery. Soon after reaching the Thames they were joined by Lieutenant McGregor with seven men of the Kent militia, increasing their force to thirty-

seven officers and men. They were for the most part armed with old and defective flint-lock muskets, and there were only seven bayonets in the party. One of their number, Reuben Atwood, was still suffering from an open wound received in the night-battle at Fort Erie a year before. Others were so much exhausted that they fell down by the way, nearly helpless from sheer fatigue.

Leaving four of the weakest men in charge of the horses, which were also nearly tired out, Medcalf pushed hastily forward on foot with the remainder. McGregor's local knowledge then proved of the utmost service. About an hour before break of day they surrounded the enemy's station, and so complete was the surprise, that a volley through the windows was the first intimation that the bewildered inmates received of their presence. Sergeant James McQueen, of the Norfolk militia, burst open the door with the butt of his gun and rushed in, followed by the rest of his party. The Americans made but a feeble resistance, and soon yielded, five of them being injured. Thirty-nine regular soldiers surrendered to thirty-three militiamen.

There was no time to be lost, as it was reported that a reinforcement from Detroit was expected to arrive the same day.

The wounded men were paroled and left behind, the captured arms distributed among the militia of the neighbourhood, and the return march at once begun. Two of the prisoners escaped on the road, but the remainder were safely conducted to the headquarters of General Drummond, who was so highly pleased that he immediately promoted the leader of the expedition to the rank of Captain, as a mark of appreciation of "his loyalty, gallantry and indefatigable zeal."

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