

# FORT MALDEN

## AND

### THE OLD FORT DAYS



Probably the reason why so many of the details of Canadian history have been taken for granted by our history writers, or left untold, is the circumstance that the archives of Britain and France would need to be searched for fuller statement of fact. One of the events, whose scant recording is to be deplored, is the founding of Fort Malden, at the mouth of the Detroit River and head waters of Lake Erie. One sentence only have I found touching its earlier history prior to 1812, a sentence from the illustrated Atlas of the Dominion issued in Toronto in 1881. It is this:—"for years after the treaty of peace had been signed at the close of the War of Independence, the British still held the military post at Detroit; but in 1796 it was turned over to the Americans, and the British selected the site of Amherstburg, which had been laid out as a town the previous year, on which to erect a fort, and to this they removed the guns and stores from Detroit during the year 1796." Mr. F. E. Elliott of the Point Farm immediately below the town, is fully convinced however, from family reminiscences, that there were fortifications here already when his grandfather, the late Col. Matthew Elliott, came here in 1784. If the presence of old Indian forts in the adjoining townships be an indication, the probability is that he is right.

But though little is found on record of its founding, its subsequent history is common property. Established in the early days in anticipation of events, the events themselves at two important points in our history, proved the utility of the step taken, for in 1812 and again in 1837-'38 there was war upon this frontier.

Amherstburg—the name then as now of the old fort town—was the western centre of warlike demonstrations in the contest of 1812, though the seat of war was the whole Detroit River, on both its banks. On the breaking out of the war Fort Malden was garrisoned by "200 of the 41st, 50 of the Newfoundland company, and 300 of the militia, with a detachment of Royal Artillery, being 600 men in all." (Kingsford.) An old resident of the town is responsible for the statement, that for many years subsequent to 1812 there were but ramparts here, and that the fort buildings were erected only in 1839-40. But the number of men doing service under Colonel Proctor in 1812 would seem to call for some further explanation as to the available accommodations. It is hardly to be supposed that regulars defending a strategic, fortified post, would live out of doors in the fashion of their Indian allies.

Col. St. George was in command of Fort Malden when, on July 12, 1812, Gen. Hull crossed from Detroit to the Town of Sandwich at the head of 2500 regulars of the American army. A few days