

# FORT WELLINGTON, PRESCOTT, ONT.



THE war with the United States that was officially declared on the 18th June, 1812, had long been foreseen by the military authorities in Canada; and Major-General Brock had done all that was possible with the extremely limited means at his disposal to render the places of most importance capable of defence. The single line of communication from Quebec and Montreal to the Upper Provinces required protection; and towards that end the erection of a defensive work was commenced early in 1812 at the little village of Prescott, then in its infancy. The fort was a small quadrangle, composed of wood and earth, subsequently being strengthened by wooden palisades skirting the outer base; its construction was of the most primitive pattern, without a single flanking angle or exterior obstruction of any kind. The only building in the fort was a block-house, although at a little later date separate barracks were erected for the garrison. No guns could be spared at first for its defence; but on news of the breaking out of the war reaching Prescott its inhabitants and garrison fished up from the bottom of the river several old French guns, of antique pattern, that had formerly been used for the defence of some of the islands in the vicinity during the period of French occupation; these islands had been dismantled a few years previously by order of Sir James Craig, and the cannon thrown into the river. As might have been expected, this hastily improvised artillery proved anything but a success. When fished up, they lacked trunnions, a defect which the zealous villagers endeavoured to supply by substitutes of wood with iron hoops; while for carriages, they were dependent on whatever local skill was available for the construction of this essential adjunct to heavy ordnance. On the 2nd of October, 1812, this novel battery opened fire on Ogdensburg, situated directly across the river. The labours of the zealous garrison were in vain; the guns would not carry the required distance, and each shot went into the river; and the bursting of one of the cannon wounded several of the amateur gunners, and put a sudden stop to their exertions. Shortly afterwards an officer of the Royal Engineers was sent to examine the work, and all the guns were condemned as being unfit for use. The garrison of the fort at this time consisted of two companies of the Canadian Fencibles, 40 men of the Newfoundland Regiment and eight artillerymen.

On the following day a reinforcement arrived, consisting of two companies of the Stormont militia; and that same night Colonel Lethbridge, the commandant, decided to make an attack on Ogdensburg, announcing his intention at that evening's parade. Early on the morning of the 4th the whole force was embarked in batteaux, and proceeded to pull across the river to the attack; but the strength of the current was misjudged and while some distance from the opposite shore, the boats were swept down under the direct fire of the American batteries. Some confusion took place and the whole flotilla was ordered back. Our loss in this ill-managed affair was three killed and four wounded.

No shelter existed in the fort for the Stormont men, the small barrack being occupied by the first arrivals. The militia, known as the "Stormont Flankers," set to work and built substantial huts of rough stone, well sodded, and covered with planks; these were so comfortable as to excite the envy of the rest of the garrison. Unfortunately the builders soon lost them. A few weeks after the river skirmish the "Flankers" were allowed to go home, being relieved by a detachment of militia from Leeds County; but while marching down to Cornwall they met Colonel Pearson, inspecting field-officer, on his way to Prescott from Montreal, who ordered them back to the post just vacated. On arrival there they found the Leeds militia in their snug quarters, and were forced to put up for the winter in a large stone house, some little distance out of the village.

Colonel Pearson soon succeeded Colonel Lethbridge in the command of the fort, and brought with him, as Staff-Adjutant, Lieut. Ridge of the 8th Kings Regiment. The two companies of the Canadian Fencibles were withdrawn and replaced in part by a company of the 8th under Capt. Eustace, supplemented within a few weeks by

two companies of the Glengarry Light Infantry that came up from Montreal under command of Major Macdonnell, formerly of the King's. Macdonnell and Ridge were capital officers, full of vim and dash. The garrison were under arms every morning an hour before daylight, and remained on the *qui vive* until the pickets came in. Lieut. Ridge chose fifty men from each of the militia corps, and daily had them out with a detachment of the Newfoundland Regiment on the ice in front of Prescott, until they were perfectly up in their drill.

On the 19th of February, Major Macdonnell was sent over to Ogdensburg under a flag of truce, to remonstrate with the American commanding officer (Major Forsythe) for his barbarous practice of sending small predatory parties across the river in exposed places, to burn the houses of settlers, rob them of their goods and take prisoners any of the male inhabitants they could find. Forsythe's answer was unsatisfactory, and in the course of conversation he said that he would be glad to meet the garrison of Prescott in a fight on the ice some day, to which Macdonnell replied that he would certainly oblige him on the first possible occasion. Two days later Colonel Pearson was appointed to command elsewhere, when Macdonnell succeeded him at Prescott; his opportunity for gratifying the gallant Forsythe had now come and he lost no time in giving it effect. On the morning of the 23rd the garrison paraded at half-past six o'clock and pushed across the river as rapidly as possible on the ice. Why the attack was not made earlier is a matter of conjecture, but at the time chosen there certainly was sufficient light for the Americans to see the movements of the British force, which consequently came under fire very soon after it had left the Canadian shore. The attack was made in two columns, one under command of Capt. Jenkins, of the Glengarry Light Infantry, the other under Lieut. Ridge; the former was exposed to such a fire that the only gun with it was upset, its gunner killed and Jenkins himself seriously wounded; the men, losing heart, returned to their own side of the river. Ridge's attack was more successful and the American fort was taken, the guns spiked and the whole garrison driven headlong out of their position; their opponents aided in this by the remnants of the other column who quickly recovered themselves and hastened to join in the main attack. Our loss was eight killed and fifty-two wounded, principally in Captain Jenkins' column; the American loss in killed was twenty and a large number wounded; four officers and seventy men were made prisoners. The British also captured eleven pieces of cannon and a large amount of military stores, besides burning the four armed vessels which were in the harbour.

No material change in the garrison took place until November, when the 2nd Battalion of the 89th Regiment was ordered there, and did out-post duty at Gananoque and

other posts on the Kingston road. In the following June this fine corps was despatched to the Niagara frontier, and did splendid service at the battle of Lundy's Lane. No further hostilities of special note took place in the immediate vicinity of Fort Wellington; a strong garrison remained there during the remainder of the war and for a number of years afterwards. About 1826 all troops were withdrawn from the post. During the stormy scenes of 1838, the post again came into use but was found too small and feeble to be of value; it was therefore greatly enlarged and strengthened, huge parapets of earth being erected, faced with stone and surrounded by a palisade; a sally-fort was made on the southern face, and several buildings for the accommodation of men and stores were erected.

It was at Fort Wellington that the rally of the militia took place on the 13th of November 1838, prior to their attack on the infamous scoundrels under Von Schultz who had crossed on the previous day from the American side and had taken refuge in the Windmill, an old building of great strength a few miles below Prescott; it is unnecessary to say that the attack was successful, although the rebels fought desperately and inflicted severe loss on our men. Over fifty of the American sympathizers were killed, many wounded and over one hundred taken prisoners; these latter were treated with much leniency, only ten being executed, and nearly fifty received a free pardon. A garrison was maintained there for a considerable time after the suppression of the rebellion, but was finally withdrawn; and for a number of years the only occupants have been a caretaker and his family. The fort is one of the many military buildings in Canada that are worthy of a better fate than has been theirs since the departure of Her Majesty's troops. There is no reason in the world why Fort Wellington, Fort Lennox (Isle-aux-Noix) and other military stations that are in fairly good condition should not be used for at least a short time each year as the central point of camping grounds for brigade camps, or for detachments of our volunteers who go under canvas occasionally, with a view to an acquirement of knowledge of those portions of a soldier's life which can be best learned in conditions assimilating to active service in the field.

## A Badge of Protection.

"The best protection a young woman can have in this city," said a big policeman on the Broadway squad yesterday, "is one of those little silver crosses that the King's Daughters wear. I've noticed that nowadays the professional masher will look first at the bosom of a woman's dress and if that little cross is dangling from a buttonhole he passes her by without even a stare. It's the same way on the street cars as on the street. The young woman who wears one of those badges has got the whole car load of men to take care of her and jump on the fellow that dares to annoy her. The cross is getting to be looked on with the same respect and deference as a nun's garb. As a safeguard it beats the average policeman all hollow."—*New York Sun*.



LAYING THE CORNER STONE OF GRACE CHURCH.