

# Legend of Laura Secord: True or False?

Several years after the victory at Beaver Dams a story about Secord warning Lt. Fitzgibbon of the American advance began circulating. Forty years later, Secord provided this statement of her encounter with the Haudenosaunee: *when I came to a field belonging to a Mr. Decamp [Ducharme] in the neighborhood of the Beaver Dam. By this time daylight had left me. Here I found all the Indians encamped; by moonlight the scene was terrifying and to those accustomed to such scenes might be considered grand. Upon advancing to the Indians they all rose and with some yells said, "Woman," which made me tremble. I cannot express the awful feeling it gave me, but I did not lose my presence of mind. I was determined to persevere. I went up to one of the chiefs, made him understand that I had great news for Capt. FitzGibbon and that he must let me pass to his camp or that he and his party would all be taken. The chief at first objected to let me pass, but finally consented, after some hesitation, to go with me and accompany me to FitzGibbon's station, which was at the Beaver Dam, where I had an interview with him.*

(Anglo-American Magazine, Vol. III., Toronto, November, 1853)



History does not record what Chief escorted her. Ducharme spoke little English, but at least two warriors – John Tutlee and John Warner – helped her reach the British officer. She credited FitzGibbons for capturing the Americans with no mention of the warriors. In turn, FitzGibbon wrote a certificate acknowledging what Secord had accomplished and stated that his detachment captured the Americans, with no mention of the Indian Department warriors. It is difficult to imagine how a woman could have made her way past the Mohawk sentries and stumbled into their camp unnoticed as she claims. Historians