

THE BATTLE OF STONEY CREEK AND THE BLOCKADE OF FORT GEORGE

On the afternoon of the 2th of May, 1813, the left wing of the weak division commanded by Brigadier-General Vincent was driven from its position at Niagara with severe loss, both of men and munitions of War, and began its retreat by way of St. David's and DeCew's Falls. Colonel Robert Nichol, the Quarter-Master General of Militia, relates that General Vincent at first intended to retire to Fort Erie, in the hope of maintaining himself there until he could be joined by Colonel Proctor's Division from the Detroit River, and that only his own strong objections, supported by Lieut.-Colonel Harvey and Captain Milnes of the Governor-General's staff prevented him from adopting that very hazardous course and induced him to retreat upon Burlington Heights instead.

The numerous small detachments posed at the Batteries along the River, between Queenston and Chippawa, dismantled their works and joined the retreating column in the course of the afternoon, and a halt was made for the night at the Beaver Dams, where a small magazine of ammunition and provisions had been formed several days before, in anticipation of this emergency.

Before morning, Lieut.-Colonel Cecil Bisshopp came in with the greater part of the force which had been watching the river and lake shore between Chippawa and Point Abino, and two companies of the 8th Regiment accompanied by a few Officers and Seamen of the Royal Navy under Captain R.H. Barclay on the way to join the Lake Erie Squadron, marched across the country from Twenty-Mile Creek, where they had arrived in boats from Burlington the preceding afternoon en route for Fort George.

All the heavy artillery mounted on the fortifications and a great proportion of the bulkiest store of the Army were necessarily destroyed or abandoned, and the Militia residing on the south side of the Chippawa were instructed to disband.

It soon appeared that there was little danger of molestation from pursuit. The American Army was too much exhausted by the efforts of the day to follow far. General Dearborn and his second in command, General Lewis, even seem to have been in some doubt as to the direction of Vincent's retreat. A party of light infantry had advanced cautiously along the Queenston Road for two or three miles when it was peremptorily recalled from fear of an ambush. Several of their armed vessels then ascended the river to cover the passage of Colonel Burn with a Regiment of Dragoons and a body of heavy artillery from the Five Mile Meadows. These troops crossed several hours too late to intercept Vincent's retreat as had been projected. Yet on the whole, the invading Army was decidedly elated by its partial success, gained with trifling loss, and it was triumphantly announced that "the American Flag now proudly waves over the Pandora's box of the Frontiers".

Before night came, Dearborn was again quite prostrated by illness and fatigue, and retired to his quarters at Fort Niagara, leaving orders for General Lewis to continue the pursuit at daybreak next morning in the direction of the Beaver Dams, where it was then reported that the British intended to make a stand. The village and neighbouring farm houses were found to be almost entirely deserted.

Many of the inhabitants had fled to the hamlet at the mouth of the Twelve-Mile Creek, already some-times known as St. Catharines, whither several of the wounded militia men from the battlefield were also conveyed by their sorrowing friends. Most of