

BILLY GREEN

AND

BALDERDASH

A Presentation of the Facts



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This version was prepared in November 2011 for UELAC with several amendments for clarity and two corrections (“Hannah Corman” was in fact Hannah Green and the reference “H.A. Corman 1909” is now accurately cited as 1916). We introduce the detail that Billy told Dr. Brown his story before August 1856.

FOREWORD

This publication has been authorized by the Stoney Creek Historical Society in an effort to clarify the facts surrounding the exploits of Billy Green and what has traditionally been believed concerning his contribution to the British triumph at the Battle of Stoney Creek. As we approach the bicentennial celebrations of this important battle, the Society wishes to clarify the heroic role of Billy Green and to respond appropriately to recent attempts to downgrade his importance.

Board of Directors
Stoney Creek Historical Society

James Elliott, a former reporter for the *Hamilton Spectator*, has stated that the story of Billy the Scout's actions during the War of 1812 is fictitious, made up years after his death to give the residents of Stoney Creek a hero to hold up beside the model of Laura Secord.

Elliott's Appendix A, pages 207 to 216, in his book *Strange Fatality* is an example of this questioning of the role of Billy Green, publicized in short form in the *Hamilton Spectator Weekend Reader* on 12th December, 2009, under the banner "Is the Billy Green story balderdash?" with a sub-heading, "Evidence deconstructs the enduring legend of Battle of Stoney Creek 'hero'".

Some of Elliott's statements may be misleading, as in the following from the *Weekend Reader*:

"Land petitions were often used by vets to toot their own horn, yet his notes said nothing more distinguishing than, "William Green did his duty."

Billy's "notes" referred to in the above quotation were an affidavit attached to his petition for land (further discussed below) and were written by James Crooks. In fact, the statutory wording of the affidavit made by James Crooks at the Court of the Quarter Sessions was required to say that Billy 'did his duty' in the War of 1812 as noted in the following Order-in-Council:¹

YORK, 27th June, 1816.

"Public notice is hereby given by order of His Excellency Governor in Council, that no petition from sons and daughters of U. E. Loyalists will be hereafter received without a certificate from the Magistrate in Quarter Sessions, signed by the chairman and Clerk of the Peace, that the parent retained his loyalty during the late war, and was under no suspicion of aiding or assisting the enemy. And if a son then of age, that he also was loyal during the late war, and did his duty in defense of the Province. And if a daughter of an U. E. L. married, that her husband was loyal, and did his duty in defense of the Province." (Signed) JOHN SMALL, Clerk of the Executive Council.

Another case where Elliott's readers could be misled is:

"... there is evidence that heroics attributed to Green were carried out by his older brother."

The older brother referred to was Freeman Green, a private in the 5th Lincoln County Militia. Freeman's land petition makes no claim that he performed any heroics. What a separate affidavit of Samuel Smith attests to is "that [Freeman] was in the Battles of Queenston and Stoney Creek and assisted in the taking of two of the enemies (*sic*) Generals at Stoney Creek."²

Since Freeman was attached to the 49th Regiment³ it is very likely that he was with the soldiers who captured the American generals and the phrase is correct in its meaning of being present and supporting in a subordinate role. Elliott may, however, be referring to the fact that Freeman took information to the British officers. Elliott has now restated his argument: "As for the legendary Billy Green, Elliott said his research suggests a minor role, if any, in the battle and that the farm boy didn't alert British troops of the Yankee encampment or guide them to it."⁴ Elliott is setting up a straw man. We know that several British officers reconnoitred the American camp before the battle and that Freeman Green and others took information to the British earlier on. No one could claim that Billy alone provided the British with their knowledge of the American position.⁵ Nor was Billy the only one who knew the way from Burlington Heights to Stoney Creek.

Other original sources, such as the diary of Peter Van Wagner for 1877, give corroborating evidence for Billy's actions. Van Wagner's words constitute a concise response to Elliott's assertions, suggesting that further research was needed, particularly as Elliott cites documents referring to other men named William Green. Simple confusion is understandable if the research was cursory: two related sets of Green brothers migrated to Ontario from the same restricted area of New Jersey, together with a complex collection of interconnected relatives. The name William appeared in all these prolific Green families, generation after generation.

The following is from Peter Van Wagner's diary:⁶

"Sunday, March 18, 1877

Just as cold as ever. March playing the part February should have played. Cold, cold, cold. About 10 am Mr Epp called and returned the poles. He told us Mr Green [Billy Green] would be buried today. I hurried

off, but the 'pigeon house' or English Church was so crowded I could not get in. Many were standing outside.

Mr Green was an old man and one of the old settlers. Probably born here and was perhaps eighty years old.⁷ He was an eccentric character. [...] Green served as a Flanker during the war and was an adept at beating the drum, a task which never left him. He lived on the mountain above Stoney Creek and on fine Summer evenings he made it a practice to come to the edge of the mountain and beat his drum a couple of hours. This he has kept up for more than half a century. All within reach of the sound knew very well “Bill Green’s” drum. Last Summer brought out the last tap of his drum.

[During the War of 1812] Green was present at several engagements & notably at the Battle of Stoney Creek where an occurrence took place which troubled him to the last of his days. In a charge on a picquet he ran a man through who had an empty gun without a bayonet. This was related to me by Dr. Brown as he attended Green in dangerous illness where he told the doctor he was very sorry for what he had done, for he knew the U.S. soldier was defenceless for he had seen him discharge his piece.

He was as long as I had any knowledge of him a kind & harmless person, much given to playing jokes on people. With him another of the old lights has gone out. “Vade in pace” [Go in peace].

Peter Van Wagner, although reciting hearsay evidence, was no doubt careful with his words as a long-serving justice of the peace and magistrate, and he places Billy exactly where his own version of the story of the Battle of Stoney Creek has him, in action, and killing one of the American sentries. Billy said that he was given “a corporal’s sword” and indeed he had an English-made sword of the appropriate type and period, still retained by his descendant Barbara Green.⁸ While we cannot prove how or when he came by this sword, it is plausible that he was provided with some form of protection – even drummer boys had swords. Elliott implies in

Appendix A to *Strange Fatality* that Billy may have laid claim to killing a sentry leaning or lying under a tree, but that - to the contrary - local people knew that the famous Assistant Sergeant Major Fraser had dispatched this sentry.⁹ Billy clearly said (acknowledging his forgetfulness, since the flints had been removed) that he told someone behind him to shoot, but the officer ordered the bayoneting of the American sentry by the tree. Billy stated that he killed a sentry near the church, not the sentry under the tree. Billy told his story to Dr. Brown prior to August 1856, when Van Wagner's diary records that the Browns were on the point of leaving Stoney Creek (see also Anon. 1859).

That Billy should have been haunted by what he had done in killing a defenceless man, and have become increasingly reticent as he got older about what he saw and did, is not surprising. The excitement of chasing around and pretending to be Iroquois to frighten the American soldiers gave way to a harsh reality. He had gone down to Grimsby early in the morning, down the escarpment, back up the escarpment, back to and around Stoney Creek, to Burlington Heights, back to Stoney Creek and - sleepless - witnessed a battle and its aftermath. He helped to gather the dead. There is no claim that he was the only one who reconnoitred the situation, there is certainly no claim that he skewered the sentry under the tree, or that he, rather than Sergeant Fraser, led the final crucial push against the Americans. Nevertheless, Billy played an important role. As a motherless, unschooled child, he had spent his entire life roaming the surroundings of Stoney Creek. His bush skills were attested to, as well as his risk-taking nature:¹⁰ he was the best choice to speed the password to the British officers and to help guide them back to Stoney Creek through an exceptionally dark night. There is little reason to doubt that the password (which we will discuss below) was learned by the British and no reason to question the claim of kinship by Isaac Corman to the man whose name, in abbreviated form, was used as the password. Indeed, there is no published dispute as to what the countersign was: it was apparently exactly what Corman stated it to have been.

The major discrepancies between official accounts and that of Billy, according to Elliott's appendix in *Strange Fatality*, come down to the number of shots heard before the British reached the American sentries, one or three. Elliott's own approved authority, Biggar ("serious", "even-handed", "careful"), writes¹¹ that there was indeed firing heard in the location of Davis' Tavern at Big

Creek before they came to the American camp. Elliot notes that his source for “one shot” was Merritt. A cadet near Billy was, however, unaware that Merritt’s light dragoons even accompanied the British force, so far were they to the rear.¹² However many shots were heard, it was decided that the soldiers must disable their guns to ensure silence.¹³ This implies confidence that the British could find and closely approach the sentries and Billy stated that the order “Fix flints” was not given until after the American sentries had been dealt with.

Some noteworthy errors in *Strange Fatality* are recorded below. Elliott’s statements are each followed by a response:-

Elliott: “William Green (1794-1877) a member of the 5th Lincoln County militia.....” Page 207

Response: Billy was not a member of the militia at the time of the Battle of Stoney Creek. A check of the War of 1812 Muster Rolls of the 5th Lincoln County Militia¹⁴ shows that Billy was not on the payroll until the 17th September, 1813 as a member of the 2nd Flank Company 5th Lincoln Militia.

Elliott: “.....the name William Green appears on the list of militia paroled at Fort George on condition of not bearing arms against the United States.” Page 208

Response: Elliott has the wrong William Green. The defeat at Fort George took place on 27th May, 1813, prior to the Battle of Stoney Creek. William Green in the Provincial Light Dragoons, present at Fort George,¹⁵ is the most likely candidate. The 2nd York Militia was also present but no William Green was on the payroll at that time. Elliott goes on to say that Billy was drawing pay in June 1813. Elliott’s statement on this matter continues with the following assumption:-

Elliott: “... his company... Hatt’s company...”: here Elliott states that Billy is a private in Samuel Hatt’s Company of the 5th Lincoln Militia.” Page 208

Response: Elliott has the wrong William Green, one who was older. The William Green in Captain Samuel Hatt’s Company drawing pay at the time of the Battle of Stoney Creek was No. 8 on the payroll as a member of the 1st Flank Company of the 5th

Lincoln Militia. Men from the 1st Flank Company transferred between that and the 2nd York Militia, neither of which was recruited from the area of Stoney Creek. The name “William Green” is on the paylists for Applegarth’s Company 2nd York Militia in late 1812,¹⁶ the 1st Flank Company of the 5th Lincoln Militia in the summer of 1813, and in the 2nd York Militia (Ryckman’s Company) for late 1813 and 1814. The 1st Flank Company of the 5th Lincoln Militia was not present for the Battle of Stoney Creek¹⁷.

On the other hand, William Green from Saltfleet (i.e. Stoney Creek) served in Captain Gershom Carpenter’s Company, under Colonel Andrew Bradt (commanding the 2nd Flank Company of the 5th Lincoln County Militia). This is confirmed in details relating to an award ceremony in Hamilton in 1875: we will discuss this award ceremony in more detail below. The only mention of William Green of Saltfleet in the Muster Rolls is between 17th September, 1813 and the 25th of October, 1813, well after the Battle of Stoney Creek. Indeed, entries 17 to 20 on the list for that later period show the family of brothers, Samuel Green, Freeman Green, John Green and William Green, together.

There is every reason to doubt that the 2nd Flank Company fought at the Battle of Stoney Creek. Isaac Corman was home with his wife; Freeman Green was attached voluntarily to the 49th Regiment of Foot; at the award ceremony in 1875 Elias Pettit, in Gershom Carpenter’s Company with Billy, did not claim to have been at the Battle of Stoney Creek, indicating that the 2nd Flank Company was not officially involved. As with many of the Wentworth County people in the nineteenth century, there were family connections here. Elias Pettit was both Van Wagner’s father-in-law and a nephew of Isaac Corman. We will provide more detail on these men below.

Elliott: “... his claim American troops fired on civilians in Stoney Creek and narrowly missed hitting his sister-in-law and her infant daughter sounds unlikely....” Page 209

Response: John Robinson, writing for the *Hamilton Spectator*, 24th March, 1973, referred to a 1951 interview with R.E. Glover, grandson of Hannah Green, the daughter mentioned by Elliott. Over 90 years old, Glover confirmed that he had seen the fence rail

with the musket ball lodged in it because it had been preserved in the family for many years.

Elliott: “Green said the British thought he was a spy. “I had to tell them all I knew before they would believe me” – yet as an active member of the 5th Lincoln his identity and character would have been easy enough to determine.” Page 209

Response: Billy was, at that time, not a member of the 5th Lincoln County Militia. The British officers would have every reason to grill him thoroughly since there were questions about the loyalty of some settlers. One cousin, lately arrived from New Jersey, of the related Greens of Lundy’s Lane was even to join Willcocks in fighting against the British, as did several men from Wentworth County. A number from among the local militamen are stated to have “deserted to the enemy”.¹⁸ British officers would not have accepted this extraordinary chance without verifying that no trap was being set.

Elliott: “In 1820, Green applied for a land grant based on his service in the 5th Lincoln during the war. His petition, an ideal place to toot his own horn, notes nothing more distinguished than “the said William Green did his duty.” Page 210

Response: Billy applied for a Son-of-a-Loyalist (S.U.E.) land grant in 1820. He never applied for a militia bounty land grant.¹⁹ Billy jointly inherited part of Lot 24, Conc. 4 and all of Lot 25, Conc. 5, Saltfleet Township, with his brother John Green. His S.U.E. grant gave him Lot 65 North of Talbot Road West in Orford Township, Kent County.²⁰ The Order-in-Council previously discussed is the source for the statement that Billy “did his duty.” It was a statement required by law, nothing more. Elliott’s assumption about the meaning of these words is incorrect.

Elliott: “Other than the Slater diary and the revised version produced by his grandson John W. Green, there is no evidence whatsoever that William Green ever claimed to be a major player in the Battle of Stoney Creek.” Page 213

Response: Abraham Corman (1823 – 1912) wrote a detailed account of his father Isaac’s part in obtaining the countersign. It was recorded that Isaac was recaptured by soldiers after he left the

American camp on the beach, the soldiers then remaining overnight with him at the Corman house.

“During the evening Corman was closely questioned by the officer commanding, who upon learning that Corman, like himself, was a cousin of President and General William Henry Harrison, gave him the password for the night, Will-Hen-Har, and released him.

On his way home he was met by Billy Green the Scout, who had been sent out in search of him. He quickly gave his brother-in-law the American password and urged him to take it with all possible speed to General Harvey, in command of British troops at Burlington Heights, seven miles distance. Corman then proceeded home to his delicate wife.

The Americans, realizing all too late the seriousness of their act, sent guards to watch Isaac Corman for the night.

General Harvey, after much persuasion, and led by Billy Green, made a forced march and night attack on the Americans now encamped at the Gage homestead west of Stoney Creek, and won the decisive victory of the Battle of Stoney Creek.”

The above retelling of the story was presented at a United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada meeting on June, 2nd 1936, and we will discuss some details and its date of origin below. Billy may not have claimed a major part in the battle but others clearly placed him in the vanguard of the advancing British troops.

Elliott: “sometime between Biggar’s 1873 account of the battle and Van Wagner’s “revelation” of 1889, the persona of Billy Green was cut from whole, or nearly whole, cloth to create a Stoney Creek hero who could stand beside Laura Secord. There is, of course, no smoking gun to identify the tailor or tailors, but a circumstantial case can be built against Van Wagner.” Page 213

Response: Here Elliott, though hedging his bets, is telling us that the Billy Green story was made up after his death, but in fact the

story was being researched within a year or two of 1873. Quoting Peter Van Wagner writing in 1900:²¹

“The little I may say concerning the battle of Stoney Creek shall be traditional, culled from accounts given by participants in the conflict, and from others who came upon the field early in the morning following the battle. These people have long since gone into the shadows of the past; “No one left to tell the tale,” except by hearsay - which when confirmed by a number of witnesses is quite as reliable as official accounts given to press home certain points necessary to account for certain results. In this instance let us compare traditional with official representations. [...]

At the battle of Stoney Creek Col. Harvey was in immediate command, guided by the valiant scout William Green. [...] Green’s descendants may not thank me for alluding to the subject, but I am told by them that their grandfather in his old age received from the Government the munificent pension of \$20.00 a year in recognition of his indispensable services at this famous battle.”

Respectfully, Hans
P.S. Van Wagner,
Ex-Sergt 3rd Gore Regt, 1837-38

Peter Van Wagner (1818-1906) of Saltfleet was a justice of the peace and magistrate from the time of the Statute of 1842, when such appointments were made “on the basis of character and standing in the local community”.²² As recorded in his obituary,²³ he wrote for the Hamilton press for many years under the pen name of “Hans.” Elliott’s consistent characterization of Van Wagner as an “amateur” and a “phrenologist”²⁴ is in noteworthy contrast to his praise of Biggar, the preferred source.

Phrenology is now regarded as fallacious, of course, but was of particular interest to early Victorian criminologists with liberal views.²⁵ In his daily diary of events, for 29th September, 1850, referring to a Congregational minister in a disparaging way, Van Wagner writes “...some years ago when he and I were in the Phrenological business...”. The implication is clear. Van Wagner was completely up to date in rejecting the whole “business”.

Times also gave a summary of what Van Wagner had said earlier during the battlefield tour: he gave specifics of the battle and the names of the men who had buried American soldiers in the churchyard (not Billy). Van Wagner was praised for being brief and it was noted that there was no disagreement on any major point with John Davis, the other tour leader. The *Hamilton Spectator* of the same date recorded only that Van Wagner seconded a motion. Beyond that, it mentioned that Van Wagner and Davis were “rightfully looked upon as worthy repositories of information and [...] their accounts agreed with an accuracy that did credit to their memories.” They disagreed, it seems, only on the size of the loaves of bread the Americans left behind.

In addition to the evidence presented in the responses above, it is worthwhile to provide more detail with regard to some specific matters, beginning with the facts of the “munificent pension”.

1875 AWARD FOR 1812 VETERANS:

The Sessional Papers of 1876²⁸ record the parliamentary occasion in 1875, when veterans of the War of 1812 were granted a gratuity, awarded by application through MPs or other authorized persons, to the committee that disbursed the funds. To obtain the award there had to be other people with personal knowledge of a man’s service willing to make a solemn declaration. The committee researched and approved or disapproved the application. Since the funds were insufficient, there was some pressure to disapprove applications. But Billy was approved, although on the Sessional Papers gratuity list, in the column headed “Corps or Division in which he served” nothing more is noted than “Col. Bradt”: Andrew Bradt commanded the 2nd Flank Company of the 5th Lincoln County Militia. Local Hamilton newspapers recorded that Billy was the first or second in line of the veterans who were present to receive their awards.

The *Hamilton Evening News* of the 4th of October, 1875 reported:

“The officers in attendance [at Hamilton Council Chambers] on behalf of the Government were Lieut. Col. Macpherson, Lieut. Col. Villiers and Major Alger.

The following claims were investigated and paid:-

The first applicant was William Green, aged 82, of Saltfleet. Served in Colonel Bradt's Battalion, in Gershom Carpenter's and John Lottridge's company as a private. The names of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the company were: Jacob Rymal, Lieutenant; Richard O. Hatt, Major; John Lee, Sergeant. He was enrolled at Hamilton in October, 1812,²⁹ and was discharged at Hamilton, on the Heights, in 1815. He was present at the battle of Stoney Creek, but was not wounded."

The *Daily Spectator* of the same date, with much the same wording, puts Billy second in line (after a member of Captain Carpenter's family). Since the order of awards to the more than forty veterans present was not alphabetical, nor was it based on the mens' application numbers, it seems that Billy was recognized as being due some prominence in 1875. Only two other men claimed to have been involved in the Battle of Stoney Creek. One was a William Gage whose role was that he "assisted in the destruction of American munitions of war".³⁰ This occurred following the retreat of the Americans. The other was Timothy Downs, orderly to General Vincent who was in the rear: Downs stated that Vincent fled from the battlefield.³¹

Elliot does not give credence to Billy, although he was a proven participant. James Gage, whose account of the battle, within a couple of years of his death in 1854, is highlighted by Elliott, stated that a sentry had been killed, pinned to a tree by Sergeant Fraser³² (although other local people were convinced that the sentry was killed by John Norton and his Iroquois comrades, see fn 9). James Gage disclaimed direct knowledge of the battle.³³ Certainly, with regard to Frederick G. Snider (1793-1873), who wrongly asserted that the two American generals were captured while asleep in the church,³⁴ it seems preferable to have more evidence than the testimony of an elderly man recounting events in the far past that he had not directly witnessed. Snider was asleep in bed at the start of the battle, woken by the sound of musket and cannon fire, but Elliott³⁵ states that he gives "some credence" to Snider.

THE PASSWORD:

Biggar's 1873 article, revised and republished in 1889 and, with a wider distribution, in 1893 states:

“I have never been able to discover for a certainty whether the countersign was obtained; or if it was, how it was done. Lossing asserts that it “was obtained from a treacherous dweller near, who by false pretences had procured and conveyed it to General Vincent.”³⁶

Biggar gives major emphasis, in questioning this story, to “a man of the 49th”. The “man of the 49th” said only that the sentries asked for the password. The “man of the 49th” is identifiable³⁷ as Jarvis, a Nova Scotian cadet, aged 16, unlikely to be given full details of the advance on the American position. Only a small group of men would be sent ahead on the lookout for sentries and probably few others knew the password. But what is clear is that those scouting in front of the main British force were confident enough to approach the sentries directly with only bayonets for protection.

Biggar's reference to “Lossing” is to Benson John Lossing, who published *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* in 1868 from the American viewpoint, after visiting Stoney Creek and talking to at least one local militia officer. The actual quote from Lossing is:

“Harvey had discovered the centre to be the weakest point in Chandler's line. By one of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, who had treacherously joined the Americans and deserted, Vincent had obtained the countersign for that night, and through it he was enabled to secure the sentinels without giving alarm.”³⁸

This appears to refer to Isaac Corman's capture, friendly discourse with a supposed American cousin, and eventual release with the password in order to return home from the American beach encampment, only to be detained again when the American officer realized his error. Corman came from Maryland, via Kentucky, and had married into what had once been a well-established New Jersey family – it was difficult for the Americans to deal with the

situation. It is no wonder that there were attempts to obscure the facts of this incident. On neither side can official records be deemed to provide “full disclosure”, especially as both American and British generals needed to avoid mention of embarrassing details of capture and of being “lost in the woods”. While the Americans might wish to suggest that they were defeated by treachery³⁹ rather than through errors of judgment, it was not in the interests of the British officers to report that they were assisted to victory by some lucky ploy.

In Abraham Corman’s undated notes, recording his father Isaac’s story of the battle, Billy is given his prominent place in history:

“In the meantime Corman had given the countersign, "Will. Hen. Har.", to Green, who started for home on the mountain. He borrowed his brother Levi's horse, called "Tip," and about midnight he started for General Vincent's camp by a circuitous route up and around the mountain, past Albion Mills and around the brow of the mountain to Vincent's camp. He told them his errand and urged them to make haste, but they doubted his word. After much questioning they were finally convinced. Harvey asked Green if he knew the road, and when he said "Yes, I know every foot of it", Harvey told Green to take the lead and he rode at his side to the Battlefield at Stoney Creek.”⁴⁰

Abraham Corman must have written down the notes on which this account is based during the lifetime of his father, Isaac Corman. Isaac died in 1863, well before Elliott’s proposed origin of the story of Billy Green. Elliott states that the connection of the Corman and Harrison families is unproven. Isaac Corman’s mother belonged to a Harrison family with membership in the congregation of the Frederick First German Evangelical Reformed Church, Frederick County, Maryland. Whether this family was related to the famous Virginian Harrisons is irrelevant in this context: they certainly believed that they were.⁴¹

Not only Van Wagner, but J.H. Smith, refers to “tradition”. Smith, with added detail, talks of the local tradition that Isaac Corman obtained the password. He says that Corman was later kept prisoner in his own house by American soldiers who fled after the

battle leaving specific items which were kept for a very long time in the possession of the Corman family. Smith notes that Corman was captured as he was setting posts. It was not until 1916 that another published version of this became available, stating that Corman was setting posts near the road.⁴² These types of detail indicate the traditional local narrative.

There is a further source that mentions the Corman family retaining goods left behind by fleeing American soldiers. This is a short undated account, again showing variations within the story outline. Billy's earlier account (in the Slater diary) says "When I got up to the road I forgot [the countersign] and didn't know what to do, so I pulled my coat over my head." The account given to his grandson says "When I got up the road aways I forgot [the countersign] and didn't know what to do, so I pulled my coat over my head and trotted across the road like a bear." But the additional short account makes the situation clear: "It was along the way that Green got through the sentries that was posted along the main road and not give them the counter sign was that he watched this chance and got down on all fours and troted accrost the road like a dog as the night was dark he deceived them in that way he fled to the top of the mountain....."⁴³ It seems likely that this is a child's retelling of part of the story as a school assignment. The account ends off-topic, describing William Henry Harrison as "Johnny Cake Harrison": the reference to an enormous inaugural cake should perhaps have been to Benjamin Harrison.⁴⁴

In this account of the meeting at Davis' Corners, after Corman was freed from the American camp on the beach, we are told that Corman hurried home "easterly", and Billy set off "south" (in local terms, away from the lake) back to his brother's house. Billy would have gone south west, through the woods, skirting the Americans by Gage's Lane, until he came to the road near the church (see sketch map, page 35). He scouted along the road. Sunset that night had been at 7:38 pm⁴⁵ and it was dark, but Billy was able to establish where the sentries were along the road beyond the church and to scuttle south past them. He had gained some important knowledge, the placement of the night pickets a quarter of a mile and more west of the American camp. Biggar,⁴⁶ however, attributes the British knowledge of this to Colonel Harvey's "judgment", although Harvey had only surveyed the situation from a distance at dusk on a night that was cloudy with some rain: later a fog developed.⁴⁷

It is noteworthy that the forgetful and impulsive boy is nowhere accused of initiating or sustaining the yelling that contributed to ruining the surprise attack. Yet Billy did not hide his faults and doubts: Billy's story twice acknowledges his forgetfulness and he does not justify himself by saying that he followed the order⁴⁸ to kill the sentries. Billy's story is simple and transparent and he makes no effort to inflate his role.

WHAT DID BIGGAR LEARN FROM INTERVIEWS?

Elliott states that E.B. Biggar had five great uncles in the War of 1812 and gives the names of three who were in the same company as Billy.⁴⁹ These were, in fact, step uncles of Biggar: James died in 1849, Amos in 1851 and William in 1867 and could not have been interviewed in 1873. Their company was not present at the battle, yet Elliott implies in the *Hamilton Spectator Weekend Reader* for 12th December, 2009 that Biggar's account of the battle depended in part on his interviews with relatives: "...journalist E.B. Biggar published an account of the battle based partially on the recollections of five great uncles who served in the 5th Lincoln militia during the war, three of them in the same company as Billy Green. Biggar also interviewed Green but made no mention of him."

E.B. Biggar's Canadian great uncle was a William Biggar who married successively maternal and paternal cousins of Billy Green. This William Biggar was not in Billy's company and did not fight at Stoney Creek.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he died in 1858. The level of intermarriage of some of these families - Pettit, Green, Biggar, Gage and Smith - is only partially illustrated by referring to the five children of Billy's maternal aunt, Mary (Smith) Pettit, important to him, no doubt, since Billy's own mother had died in 1795.⁵¹ Of these five first cousins, three married children of James Biggar, one married William Gage and one married Gershom Carpenter. All these people were step relatives of E.B. Biggar through his grandfather and his grandfather's first wife. Biggar had no great uncles through his own grandmother. Since Gershom Carpenter was the brother-in-law of the William Biggar just mentioned, he could also be regarded as Biggar's great uncle. While he did not fight in the Battle of Stoney Creek, he lived until 1874 and is buried in the location where E.B. Biggar spent his childhood. Carpenter could have been interviewed, but Elliott does not claim a fourth great uncle in Billy's company. In fact, Billy

and his brother may have been Biggar's only relatives actually in the Battle of Stoney Creek. However, Freeman did not live in Wentworth County in 1873.⁵²

What did Biggar learn from the local people he might have interviewed? He describes what Stoney Creek looked like and who lived there, but with errors, indicating his lack of local knowledge: there was no one living in Stoney Creek called Spearle – the name was Spera; James Gage was not the brother of William Gage, he was the nephew. With regard to the battle, Biggar quotes from sources he has read, for example, Fitzgibbon, Merritt, Auchinleck, Lossing. However, it is evident that Biggar spoke to John Lee, the very same man who, as we shall see, confirms Billy's story of collecting the dead. Biggar was interested in obtaining from Lee the statistics of the dead. From Smith's description of Billy, such attention to detail would not be characteristic and indeed Billy's estimate that 80 British and Canadians and 200 Americans were killed was wildly inflated. Billy must, however, have given Biggar one important piece of information:

Lee does not indicate where the bodies were buried, but fellow militiaman William Green identified the knoll [...] E.B Biggar [...] said there were two burial places – the knoll and the graveyard...⁵³

Elliot continues on to confirm that there were burials at the knoll. Biggar therefore asked Billy a question and reported his obviously correct answer. Billy had helped bury the dead on the knoll.

In *Strange Fatality* Elliott places a great deal of emphasis on a footnote in Biggar's rewriting of his 1873 paper, noting that Biggar was reliable. Biggar did become a writer,⁵⁴ most of his work published by his own printing company. But there is carelessness here: for example, Biggar writes of Isaac Corman as "Peter Carman" in citing Van Wagner. How can this be? Van Wagner's diary mentions the Isaac Corman family in several contexts and he had been to school with Isaac's son, Isaac. The *Hamilton Evening Times*, 6th June, 1889 printed the erroneous name "Peter Corman", indicating that this is Biggar's source.

Biggar's 1893 article reworks a point from 1873. He now states that flints were removed from the muskets at Burlington Heights in addition to his earlier statement that at Davis' Tavern the charges

were withdrawn. An order to withdraw charges⁵⁵ is curious. With flints removed and flash pans emptied, there would be little possibility of a spark: why order the men to perform the difficult task of withdrawing the charges in the dark, taking care to lose none of the scarce supplies, and add later the precious time lost in reloading in the dark? Biggar stated that many British were killed because they had to reload their guns. Documentary evidence, as well as logic, argues against Biggar, for the officers complained that muskets were fired against orders, thus revealing the British position.⁵⁶ Clearly, the men did not have unloaded muskets: Elliott, however,⁵⁷ asserts that “Harvey ordered every gun unloaded, every flint removed...” and ignores Biggar’s contention that the flints had already been removed. Elliott does not comment on Biggar’s 1873 and 1893 statements that British deaths resulted from the unloaded guns, nor on Biggar’s claim, contradicted by Harvey and partially by Jarvis, that the position of the dead showed that half the British casualties resulted from their “long exposure before the light of the camp fires, while preparing to return the fire...of those first two volleys”.⁵⁸

BILLY DID NOT TELL BIGGAR THE STORY:

In 1873 Biggar was just 20 years old, in his first year as a journalist,⁵⁹ speaking to an octogenarian within a few years of his death. In 1893 Biggar wrote of “this Wm Green” and Elliott interprets this as a “scoffing” reference, but it may be noted that when Biggar was 20 there were multiple William Greens in Wentworth County.⁶⁰ What Biggar says is that Billy did not mention “this incident” (presumably the taking of the password to the British). That Billy should have been unwilling to talk at length to a very young man is perhaps not surprising. We can easily see Biggar as patronizing an illiterate old man, with Billy losing his hearing and his patience, and unwilling to prolong the conversation.

The original of Billy’s story, copied into an Irish school book, says “The next one [sentry] was at the church he demanded a pass. I commenced to give him the countersign and walked up. I grabbed his gun and put my sword to him. The old gun had no load in it, he had shot the ramrod away, then we could see the campfires.”⁶¹ The later version of Billy’s story says “The next guard was by the church. He took out his gun and commanded a password. I clutched his gun with one hand and stabbed him with the other.”

According to Van Wagner's recounting of the words of Billy's doctor, Billy said he had seen the sentry fire his gun. In fact, this must be true: since there would be no fires in the vicinity of sentries,⁶² the only way that Billy could have seen that the ramrod was not in place, and so had been shot away, was in the momentary light from the ignited flash pan and the flame exiting the barrel. If Van Wagner fabricated the series of documents and stories, we might expect more consistency. On the other hand, it is hardly surprising that it took life-threatening illness for Billy to be able to say, straight out, "I saw the sentry fire his gun. I knew he was completely defenceless". It is not disputed that there was a sentry close to the church, the one who fired his gun, very soon after the dispatch of the sentry under the tree. What may be disputed is whether Van Wagner would have such insight into the psychology of a man haunted by a youthful act, unable to be quite honest with his grandson. It would take a novelist of great sensitivity to fabricate such a nuanced series of accounts.

Since Biggar had grown up in Winona, he may not have known all the local Stoney Creek "traditions". He would not have had specific questions for Billy on these traditions – indeed that seems likely from what Biggar writes. Billy was asked specific questions only about the burial of the dead, so he would not have been forthcoming: as we know from his doctor, Billy was troubled by the memory of what he had done. If Billy was not forthcoming, answering only specific questions, that could hardly be surprising.

BILLY'S STORY AND THE SLATER DIARY:

This manuscript, headed "Copied from S. D. Slater's Diary", is obviously a fair copy from some original. It was apparently written with a steel nib, introduced in the 1830s but perhaps not widely available for a decade or so. There are punctuation and other errors, but it is neat until the end, when some blotching and one crossing out can be seen. The general tone is of a quite breathless retelling of a series of happenings with a great deal of detail, unnecessary detail it might be said, about where the members of Billy's family were and what they said to each other. Of the battle itself, there is almost nothing and what there is does not seem to apply to Billy himself: "We banged away again", "We shot all our powder away", but Billy had no gun. The detail up to the start of the battle is now replaced by a few confusing sentences⁶³, as one might expect from an exhausted boy, untrained for battle, unable to

take in what was going on in the dark, the noise and firelight. This narrative, which is preserved in a battered 1794 school book published by a well-known Dublin firm, was recorded 5th June, 1819 following a listing of local families with whom a country

Copied from S. D. Slater's Diary.
Sept 3. 1811 - Left Ireland for America. D.C. 8. Landed in
Quebec. Feb 1. 1819 - Arrived in York. Feb 16 Arrived
in Hamilton. Feb 17, Am chopping wood for Robert Lind,
March 3 Am at Stony Creek teaching school. Am boarding
at Mrs Samuel Green's for this week. March 10 Boarding
at Isaac Cormans, March 17 Boarding at Samuel Nash's,
March 24 Boarding at Henry Van Wagner, April 14 Boarding
at Thomas Davis, April 28 Boarding at Bradley's Hotel.
June 5 Took walk up the mountain, met Billy Green. He
told me his experience at the battle of Stony Creek.
I was 16 or 17 years old then. We heard the Americans.
were camped down below the Fort, so my brother Levi,
Sam Lee and me went down the top of the mountain,
about 6 o'clock in the morning. We got to the Fort and
stayed out on the peak till noon. When the troops
came marching up the road we stayed till all the
enemy but a few were past. Then we yelled like Indians.
I tell you them simples did run, then we ran along the
mountain and took down to the road. Levi ran across
a fellow with his boot off, putting a rag on his foot.
The soldier grabbed for his gun but Levi hit him
with a stick. He yelled and some of the scouts fired.
We made our way to the top of the mountain again.
I whooped and Levi answered. Lee went home and
the rest of us went to Levi's place on the side of
the hill. When we heard them going through the
Creek we all went out on the hill to see them.
Some of them spied us and fired, one ball struck
the bars where Jennie was sitting holding Hannah
on her arm. We all went back in the mountain
to one of Jim Stoneys trapping huts. Jennie went
to the house, after a little while two officers came
up and asked her if she had seen some Indians
around there. She said there was around back
on the mountain. They left and Jennie came out,
where we were hid and whistled I answered, I
told them I would go down to Isaacs, when I
got down there I whistled and out came Deje.

The first page of the transcribed copy of S. D. Slater's diary

school teacher, newly arrived from Ireland, had lodged.⁶⁴ The book is fascinating enough in itself. It is scribbled over in many different

hands, of both children and adults. The book seems to have been owned originally by the Blennerhassett family of Tralee, County Kerry and Dublin. The names of Richard, Thomas and Henry Blennerhassett appear, together with the transcribed diary. The transcription is not in Peter Van Wagner's handwriting.

The Cormans made sure the story of Billy Green was recorded, and noted on one page of the disintegrating school book, "History of The Battle Of Stoney Creek By Billy Green On Pages 118, 150 172". W.E. Corman donated the book to the Hamilton Scientific Association, no doubt before the founding of the Wentworth Pioneer and Historical Society in January, 1889. In 1907-1908 he was organizing a Stoney Creek branch of the Wentworth Historical Association. The minutes of the first meetings of the Stoney Creek branch of the Historical Association are available⁶⁵ and show that the initial interest related to erecting a monument on Smith's Knoll. W.E. Corman, several other members of his family and of the Green and Lee families, as well as Van Wagner's son, a high ranking army officer, were active on the executive, in historical presentations and in turning the knoll site where soldiers had been buried into a memorial. There is no mention of advancing the "Billy Green Story". The discussions focus entirely on preserving and memorializing the dead, whether British, Canadian or American.

CONCLUSION:

Elliott proposed that Van Wagner developed a narrative after Billy's death for the purpose of rivaling Laura Secord's story. A closer look at the evidence can only lead to an alternative view.

It is fascinating to hear the voice of the unschooled 25 year old in what is recorded as the earliest version of Billy's story: "... them simples did run, then we ran along the mountain and took down to the road"; the American soldier was "putting a rag on his foot" and Billy's brother "hit him with a stick". The details in this ingenuous voice follow in logical sequence. "Sometimes I would get away ahead and go back to hurry them up. I told them it would be morning before we got there. Some one said that would be soon enough to be killed." This is not the voice of Van Wagner. The second account⁶⁶ is more sophisticated in language ("I tell you those simple fellows did run") since it was written down by a literate grandson, but still convincing: the updating of the names of

locations (Big Creek becomes Red Hill Creek, Gage's Lane becomes Lewis's Lane), addition of extra detail, especially about the battle, and the repetition of previous phrases make it seem that this is a story that had been told and told again and certainly consolidated. The added detail must come from local conversations (although there is one indication that people were reading published material)⁶⁷. We have, for example, the addition of Seth White and George Bradshaw finding General Vincent, after Vincent had wandered off the battlefield and got lost. Seth White, in the 2nd Flank Company of the 5th Lincoln Militia, would have been 27 in 1813 and he and his descendants lived on in Stoney Creek. Bradshaw was not at the Battle of Stoney Creek⁶⁸ having been ordered back to Burlington Heights. Biggar wrote that John Brant (Ahyouwaeghs) and Bradshaw together met General Vincent,⁶⁹ although it was stated elsewhere that the Iroquois did not find Vincent.⁷⁰ Merritt,⁷¹ not necessarily reliable on the earlier details since his light dragoon troop was in the rear of the advance, is very clear that he was also asked to search for Vincent. What we learn from Fitzgibbon, from Merritt and from Billy's account is that the search was generally ordered. It is interesting that Van Wagner's account of the finding of General Vincent⁷² does not accord with Billy's: Van Wagner specified that the lost general was found by a local man named McDougal.

That Van Wagner fabricated these narratives, with subtle differences and nuances of detail, is hardly credible. While Billy's words seem ingenuous, if this is all fabricated then Van Wagner could only be described as truly ingenious; all the more so, since it is clear that the Green family discussed and had other accurate knowledge. The morning after the battle, Samuel Green observed that two American guns below Smith's Knoll could not be fired, stating why this was so. This was, in fact, true: the British had spiked the two guns and left them there.⁷³ Furthermore, Billy said "...we got William Gage's oxen and stoneboat and his son Peter, John Lee, John Yeager, I and several others buried the dead soldiers on a knoll...". Many Gages lived in the area in the 1870s,⁷⁴ John Lee was still living in Saltfleet in the 1870s, as was John Yeager who was a relative of the Cormans and also Billy's brother-in-law. John Lee and his brother Sam, with whom Billy had gone to Grimsby early the day before the battle, were nephews of Isaac Corman, also born in Maryland. These men must have heard Billy's story in June 1813. Would they and their families not have raised doubts if Van Wagner began perpetrating a fraud after

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Billy's death? Quite the reverse: the Corman family made sure the story was not lost. In contrast, it is clear from Van Wagner's diary that he was not an intimate of the Green family: he mentioned them rarely and without particular interest or warmth.

What is most unlikely is that Van Wagner would have supported anything that could be regarded as a triumphalist view of the American defeat. On Monday, 14th October, 1850 Van Wagner writes about the political "fools" who chose the anniversary of the Battle of Queenston for a celebration:

"And another day would have answered as well as that on which the Americans suffered defeat for we cannot live without trading with them. They buy all our wheat and we wish for free trade with them. Our farmers are suffering for it. That is suffering in purse, and while the mass is wishing for friendship with their neighbors, the Tories are celebrating this grievous defeat..."

What are we left with when all things are considered? Elliott maintains that the story of Billy the Scout was fabricated out of whole cloth years after Billy's death. How can it be then that Billy, though not on the payroll until late in 1813, was given a gratuity among the first of the local veterans to receive the award in 1875. Was Peter Van Wagner spinning a lie in his description of the funeral of Billy Green in 1877? Was Isaac Corman lying to his son Abraham prior to 1863 when he described Billy guiding the troops through the darkness, and was Hazel Corman lying in repeating Isaac's story in 1916 and 1936? In 1951, was R.E. Glover, the grandson of Hannah Green, lying when he said that he had seen the fence rail with the musket ball lodged in it?

If these are all lies, the conspiracy that Elliott has uncovered extends through several families for many years. However, Elliott appears to be retracting some elements of Appendix A to *Strange Fatality*, which may indicate that he realizes that his research was incomplete. Elliott has now again set up a straw man implying that Billy Green's contribution must be downplayed so that Sergeant Fraser's may be acknowledged. Fraser was given glowing reports by his superior officer immediately after the battle: no one doubts Fraser's courage, nor the leadership of Harvey and Plenderleath.⁷⁵ The weight of the evidence is that Billy Green, too, played an

important role in the crucial Battle of Stoney Creek, a British victory despite having far fewer men and resources than the Americans. The lack of contemporary official recognition is part of the complex story of British regulars and Canadian militiamen, of uncertain loyalties and the strain on a refugee population still establishing itself and faced with what was for many the second bloody within-family conflict of their lives. Nevertheless, before his death, this eccentric and haunted man did indeed receive official and public recognition after an attested enquiry into his presence at, and contribution to, the Battle of Stoney Creek.

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ENDNOTES:

1 Canniff 1869: 641.

² Smith’s affidavit of 7th May 1836. Library and Archives of Canada (L.A.C.) RG1, L3, Vol. 212, G Bundle 20, Petition 14, Film roll C-2035.

³ See fn 2.

⁴ *Stoney Creek News* 25th November 2010.

⁵ As emphasized, for example, in the *Daily Spectator* 17th June 1939.

⁶ Elliott 2009:207 refers to this, in quotes, as a “diary”. Van Wagner kept what is unquestionably a diary from 1850 to 1906.

⁷ He died of bronchitis at 83 on 15th March (death record 017249).

⁸ The sword is a hanger with a single fuller and a blade around 68 cm in length, made by Robert Wheeler & Son of 24 Snow Hill, Birmingham, between 1803 and 1837: <http://www.oldswords.com/makers/list.php>

⁹ Others, locals and Americans, suggested this man was killed by Iroquois: Anon. 1897:131; Fredriksen and Shaler 1984:418: the attack on this sentry left him groaning, thus alerting a sentry who fired his musket (a US officer’s letter of 9th June 1813, see Cruikshank 1939:41).

¹⁰ Smith 1897:118 wrote “.... [Billy] was well fitted for any daring adventure, and seemed to delight in danger of any kind”. Smith was related to Billy Green’s mother and married to a relative of the Greens of

West Flamborough. His account of the unusual nature of Billy as a boy must be accepted. Mrs. Simcoe (Robinson 1911:327-8) had previously commented on the family's knowledge of the land and plants and their agility. Langsford Robinson, 1912, elaborated on Billy's reputation in an inflated version of the story which might well be questioned.

¹¹ June 1873, June 1889 and the revised version, Biggar, 1893:386; for the description of Biggar, see Elliott 2009:211.

¹² Elliott 2009:114; Merritt 1863:30; Smith 1897:119.

¹³ Wood 1920-1928 3(2): 578. Flints were drawn elsewhere (1: 110) and it was a recommended practice (3(1):186). See ftns 55, 56 below.

¹⁴ L.A.C. RG9, I-B-7, volumes 24 to 26, microfilm reels T-10386 and T-10387 and volume 16, microfilm reel T-10383.

¹⁵ Green n.d.; Chartrand and Embleton 1998:6. Entry 57 of Record Group 98, Records of U.S. Army Commands, "List of Prisoners of War Paroled (exclusive of regulars) After the Taking of Fort George, May 27, 1813", does include a paroled prisoner named William Green, not an uncommon name since there was also a paroled private William Green in the 49th Regiment of Foot, NAUK - WO12 6044 49th 1811-13.

¹⁶ This William Green came from West Flamborough and his land claim certificate states that he was in Applegarth's Company from June to December, 1812 (L.A.C. RG9, I-B-4, Vol. 20, file 38, pp. 1242-1245). He gave his age as 30 4th June 1812. Note that only the first period of enlistment was required on militia land claims, based on the claims of both Freeman and John Green.

¹⁷ Chartrand and Embleton 1998:6.

¹⁸ Riddell 1922: 81. "Deserted to the enemy" is recorded on local militia lists L.A.C. R1022-11-6-E.

¹⁹ Lauber 1995.

²⁰ Archives of Ontario MS 693 RG1, C-I-3, Vol. 77, Film Roll 100 and L.A.C. RG1, L3, Vol. 213, G bundle 20, Petition 88, Film roll C-2035.

²¹ Van Wagner 1900.

²² Murray 2003:29 referring to 6 Vict, (1842), c.3, 'An Act for the Qualifications of Justices of the Peace.'

²³ December 1906, see Bailey 1991.

²⁴ Elliott 2009: 152,212, 217.

²⁵ Cooter 2005; Rafter 2008. Phrenology later appealed to racists (for example, Jackson 1867) but this would not include Van Wagner who wrote, 4th July 1862, that the only good thing to come out of the slaughter in the United States was the end of slavery, "that peculiar institution".

²⁶ The famous Canadian, Sir Daniel Wilson, was publishing on skull shape that same year (Wilson 1862). It was of great interest to many.

²⁷ Elliott 2009:217.

²⁸ Sessional Papers No. 7 Vol. 6 Third Session of the Third Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1876 Volume IX, Statement showing the Name, Age and Residence of Militiamen of 1812-15:7-40.

²⁹ No doubt in response to the general call-up of all men aged 16 to 60.

³⁰ *Hamilton Evening News* 5th October 1875.

³¹ *Daily Spectator* and *Hamilton Evening Times* 4th October 1875.

³² Elliott 2009:211. It is plausible that the sentry left groaning was bayoneted. Given the darkness, an arrow shot or the clean cleavage of a skull is less likely than an off-centre bayonet thrust or tomahawk strike.

³³ Nisbet 1895.

³⁴ Smith 1897:118. Snider's account (Hamilton Public Library n.d.) is full of errors, such as "General St. Vincent was found some days after...". Snider appears to have heard Browning's poem, first published in 1845, which refers to Cape St. Vincent.

³⁵ Elliott 2009:116. Snider did not claim to have been present at the battle, *Hamilton Evening Times* 4th October 1875.

³⁶ Biggar 1889: 6; 1893: 387.

³⁷ Biggar's quotation would be from Auchinleck 1852: 178-179 and the identification is given in Coffin 1864: 142. The boy was George Jarvis, later of Cornwall, Ontario. Jarvis appears to exaggerate his role.

³⁸ Lossing 1869: 602.

³⁹ Thompson 1952 stressed the importance of the fact that an American soldier announced within two days of the battle that the countersign was known to the British. See Niles 1813:262.

⁴⁰ Corman 1916. Note that Billy is not said to have proposed the plan to Harvey. There was extensive prior discussion of the plan and more than one man claimed to have initiated it, see Smith 1897:114.

⁴¹ *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 1887 11: 200-216.

⁴² Smith 1897:115-117; Corman 1916:27.

⁴³ Hamilton Public Library n.d. "How they came to meet": spelling and punctuation as in the transcribed 20th century typescript. Smith 1897:116 perhaps heard parts of this version of the story.

⁴⁴ Smith 2009. If true, this indicates the account dates soon after 1889.

⁴⁵ Cf. Elliot 2009:83. Twilight would have ended at around 8:13. The moon was just in its first quarter and set at 12:59 am on 6th June.
<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/astronomy.html>

⁴⁶ Biggar 1893:387.

⁴⁷ For Harvey, see e.g. Wood 1920-28: 62; for the weather, see Cruikshank c.1903:18 and 34.

⁴⁸ Cruikshank c.1903:7.

⁴⁹ Elliott 2009: 211,292 fn 18.

⁵⁰ Contra Green 1912; he was a sergeant in the 2nd Lincoln Militia.

⁵¹ Robinson 1911:328.

⁵² Aged 90 and living in Howard Township, Kent County, he was on the 1876 list of 1812 veterans to be given the award.

⁵³ Elliott 2009:216.

⁵⁴ Best known is *An Anecdotal Life of Sir John Macdonald* 1891.

⁵⁵ Biggar 1893:386.

⁵⁶ Cruikshank c.1903:7, 13 and 15 Harvey - "muskets being fired, notwithstanding my exertions to check it"; Fitzgibbon - "our men returned fire contrary to orders" and "...had we maintained silence and not fired...." See also Mills 1902:31. Harvey stated that the firing against orders allowed the Americans to pinpoint the British line.

⁵⁷ Quoting the self-contradictory letter from Jarvis, "the man of the 49th", (Auchinleck 1852: 178) clearly the source for Biggar, and for Elliott (2009:112), and probably for Merritt (1863:30). Elliott (2009: 126), contra both of Billy's accounts, suggests there was no reload order.

⁵⁸ Biggar 1893:391.

⁵⁹ Morgan 1898:82.

⁶⁰ The 1871 census lists nine William Greens in Wentworth County, including six heads of families.

⁶¹ The handwritten copy does not have perfect punctuation.

⁶² Jarvis, the "man of the 49th" (see fn 37 above) noted a watch-fire, but a sentry beside a fire would be close to the encampment, not on an advanced picket line.

⁶³ See the appendix, Billy Green and the Battle, in *Billy Green and More Balderdash* for a demonstration that Billy's original version was actually coherent and gives new information about the battle.

⁶⁴ Exactly as described for itinerant teachers Anon. 1897: 138.

⁶⁵ Virtual Museum.

⁶⁶ Published in the *Hamilton Spectator* 12th March 1938 and as Thompson, 1952. The story was recorded by John Wesley Green who was born in 1847. It might date from the early to mid 1860s.

⁶⁷ Billy's second narrative may include some wording from Harvey's account ("in very gallant style", as noted by Thompson 1952 fn 8). Billy's grandson was perhaps undertaking a school project on the battle.

⁶⁸ *Daily Spectator* 4th October, 1875; *Hamilton Evening Times* 5th October 1875.

⁶⁹ According to Elliott (2009:152), Biggar said that Brant alone found Vincent. Biggar 1889 has Brant and Bradshaw, no doubt based on Merritt; Biggar 1893 does not mention who found Vincent.

⁷⁰ Fitzgibbon, see Cruikshank c.1903:15.

⁷¹ Merritt 1863: 30, 31.

⁷² Van Wagner 1900.

⁷³ Mills 1902.

⁷⁴ Elliot uses Nisbet 1895 as evidence that Billy's story was fabricated, but the account confirms that Peter Gage took his father's oxen to gather

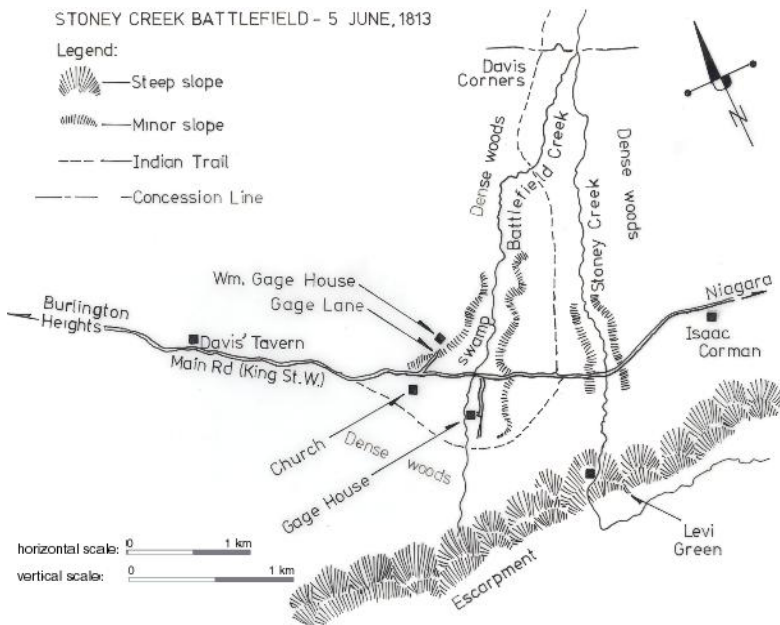
the dead. Nisbet 1895 shows the continuing local fascination with the alternative ideas on the sentry under a tree (see Biggar, 1893: 387 fn).

⁷⁵ Plenderleath to Vincent: Wood 1920-1928 2:158: Vincent praised Harvey and Plenderleath, Cruikshank c.1903:9. *Ottawa Citizen* A3 6th June 2010 “Forgotten hero saved the day for Canada 1813: historian”, one of a number of similar newspaper stories 5th – 6th June, 2010.

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SOURCES: SKETCH MAP AND ROUTE TO BURLINGTON HEIGHTS
(see page 35)

- *John Pell Stoney Creek in 1811 see Erland Lee Museum web site.
- *Sketch made by the ADC to General Chandler: see Elliott 2009:125.
- *William Ford sketch in James Hannay 1905 *History of the War of 1812* Toronto: George N. Morang & Co., page 161.
- **Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Wentworth* Toronto: Page & Smith 1875.
- *Sheets 30M/4f & 30M/49 1:25 000 maps. Surveys and Mapping Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.
- *Burghardt, A.F. 1969 Origin and development of the road network of the Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, 1770-1851 *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59:417-440 (see Figure 4, page 429).
- **Journal and Transactions Wentworth Historical Society* (1905) 4:22.



Billy's route on the evening of 5th June 1813 circled Stoney Creek. From his hiding place above Levi's house, he would have covered around 4.5 miles (7.25 km). Billy went first to Isaac Corman's house and then struck north through the woods and across the creek, where he met Isaac at Davis' Corners. He returned through the woods to the west of Battlefield Creek. He scouted along and crossed the main road near the church, going south and east around the American positions back to Levi's house. The American army had taken up a position stretching from William Gage's house, south to the foothill region below the escarpment and east to the steep banks of Stoney Creek. Their artillery was on the main road near Smith's Knoll facing west in the direction of Burlington Heights and their dragoons were in the southeast close to Stoney Creek below Levi's house. The north-south Indian trail (later Lake Ave.) was the communication route to the two American regiments on the shore of Lake Ontario. In making his traverse around the American positions from near sunset until an hour or so after dark, hidden in the darkness of the woods, Billy would have obtained valuable information. He now started out along the top of the escarpment on his perhaps 10 mile (16-17 km) route by horse and foot to Burlington Heights, arriving there sometime before 11:00.



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Remember the Cornan House