

BRANT'S VOLUNTEERS – WAR OF 1812-14: ANTONIE, JOHN, HAGGE WESTBROOK

Brant's Volunteers was an irregular corps which fought on the British side in the Province of New York. The corps was raised in spring of 1777 during the American Revolutionary War by Joseph Brant. Its initial size was about one hundred men consisting of one-fifth Mohawk and the rest New York Loyalists. The Loyalists were mostly of English, Scottish or Irish descent but all were drawn from New York. They wore a piece of yellow lace on their hats as identification.

The Ontario Register - Census of Niagara, 1783, listed under "Loyalists in the Indian Department", we find on page 212:

Anthony Westbrook - Age 47
Alexander Westbrook - Age 16
[Sarah Westbrook] - Age 45
[John Westbrook] - Age 13
[Andrew Westbrook] - Age 10
[Hagiah Westbrook] - Age 8
[Elizabeth Westbrook]- Age 14

(Those in brackets are listed as "in the colonies")

Though Joseph himself received a Captain's commission in the Six Nations Indian Dept., Brant's Volunteers were Associators: they were unpaid by the British and relied upon plunder (and Joseph's credit) for their compensation. Eventually, Frederick Haldimand authorized provisioning, but no money. Since their unit had no official recognition, many members transferred to Butler's Rangers and the King's Royal Regiment of New York. Brant's Volunteers grew to at least three hundred men. Later in the war, Brant was able to attract a larger number of Indians to his unit.

They were at the Battle of Oriskany (1777), Raid on Cobleskill, Battle of Minisink, Raid on German Flatts, Raid on Springfield (1778) and at many other battles seeing more action than most other units.

Antonie Westbrook (1738-1793) resident of Orange County, N.Y., demonstrated his loyalty to the British Crown very early in the Revolutionary War. As a consequence, his lands were confiscated and in 1778 was forced to flee to the ranks of the British forces, **serving under Captain Joseph Brant**. Antonie and wife Sarah Decker were parents of six children: Johannis -1763, Alexander – 1766, Elizabeth – 1768, **Johannis (John)** - 1770, Aenderis – 1773, and **Hagge** – 1775. Antonie was born and baptised at the Minisink Church. **1783 Niagara Census** shows, **listed under Brant's Volunteers**, as

“Loyalists under the Indian Department” were Anthony and Sarah Westbrook and their five surviving children.

In the year the war began, John and Alexander were sent into the forest to locate stray cattle. Unfortunately, they were captured by a raiding band of Mohawks who carried them to Canada for a lengthy period of time. The family believed they were dead, but they were eventually released to the British in exchange for provisions and were returned to their overjoyed parents. It was John and Alexander who encouraged the family to move to Canada when their lands were taken.

Anthony and his son John first squatted on Lots 43 & 33. Concession 1 in Ancaster. On 29 June, 1793, John and Antonie Westbrook are noted to be settled on reserve lands – the order given to confirm them in possession of their lands “adjoining the west line of Township No. 8 near the road lately laid out from the head of lake, Ontario to the River La Tranche.” Later they purchased large blocks of land from Chief Brant – with whom they remained close friends, and settled along **Fairchild’s Creek** in present day Brant County. Antonie’s youngest son, **Hagge**, settled at **Malcolm’s Mills** near present day **Oakland**, Brant County.

John served as a captain with the Fifth Lincoln Regiment in the War of 1812, later becoming a Major, and participating in the **Battle of Stoney Creek** in 1813. **Major John later married Elizabeth Gage**, daughter of Widow Mary Gage of Battlefield House, Stoney Creek, and niece of Augustus Jones, Land Surveyor.

The **Battle of Malcolm’s Mills** was a brief skirmish during the **War of 1812** in which a force of American cavalry overran and scattered a force of Canadian militia. The battle was fought on **November 6, 1814**, near the village of Oakland, in Brant County, Ontario. The skirmish was part of a series of battles fought by American Brigadier General Duncan McArthur on an extended raid into Upper Canada.

On November 6, 1814 McArthur’s men encountered a group of 400 Canadian militia drawn from elements of the 1st and 2nd Norfolk, 1st Oxford, and 1st Middlesex regiments. **The aim of the Canadian militia was to deflect McArthur’s force back the way they had come, or to keep them busy until reinforcements arrived from Burlington Heights.**

Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bostwick of the Oxford Militia, the Canadians formed a **defensive position at Malcolm’s Mills**, now the village of Oakland, nine miles (15 km) southwest of Brant’s Ford, and blocked McArthur’s route to the Lake Erie shoreline. The militia were stationed along the crest of a fairly steep slope overlooking a

bridge at the bottom of a marshy valley. The planking on the bridge had been taken up, and a barricade was improvised on the road.

The battle at Malcolm's Mill was the **last land battle of the War of 1812** fought in **Upper Canada**. McArthur's force continued to the Lake Erie shore, burning and pillaging, then headed north and back to the Thames River before continuing down the Thames and along the southern shore of Lake St. Clair, arriving back at Detroit on November 17, 1814. A small party of the British 19th Light Dragoons, led by Major Peter Chambers, shadowed McArthur's force for a large part of the return to Detroit, but they met no resistance.

Although McArthur's forces overpowered and scattered the local militia at Malcolm's Mills and were able to continue their raiding to Lake Erie, the cavalry lacked the power to push east of the Grand River and eventually retreated to Detroit.

It is believed that the meeting place for the Canadian forces to plan their altercation with the marauding American cavalry was held in the **home of Hagge Westbrook, the only building south of the battle line**. The Westbrook home is presently being reconstructed at Westfield Heritage Village near Rockton, Ontario, and was featured in their tributes to 1812 War Bicentennial.

Hagge (or Haggai) Westbrook is buried at Oakland in the UEL – plaqued cemetery there.

Major John Westbrook and wife Elizabeth are buried in the Westbrook / Shaver cemetery on the eastern edge of Brantford, Ontario, just south of #2 Highway on Shaver Road.

Loyalist Families of the Grand River Branch UEL., p.596 which, in turn, cited:

1973 Ancaster Township Historical Society's *Ancaster's Heritage*;

1920 F. Douglas Reville's *History of Brant County* - Vol. I, p. 253, and

1911 *Thamesville Herald* booklet, Westbrook-Gage Miscellany, a Souvenir of the Westbrook-Gage Reunion, Stoney Creek, Ont., July 1, 1909.