

## *ABSTRACT – THE ADVANCE*

*In September of 1814 General Prevost positions the British Army for advance from the Canadian frontier on Plattsburgh while militiamen prepare to defend the countryside.*

### THE ADVANCE

On September 2, 1814, Colonel Thomas Miller's regiment reconnoitered the west road to Chazy. Part of the Essex County militia continued with the recon on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. By the 4<sup>th</sup>, militia units took post on the Beekmantown Road, and Aiken's Company spent the night near West Chazy. Aiken's Company had come together as volunteers only the day before, composed, except for the officers Captain Martin Aiken and Lt. Azariah Flagg, of school boys, about sixteen years of age.

On the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, the British moved onto the march again. After impressing all the horse teams they could find, the right wing moved down the main road to West Chazy but skirted the village by continuing south on the Ketchum Bridge Road to its junction with the main road (Rt. 22) from West Chazy to Beekmantown.

The wing's advance guard now picked out three areas for their next bivouac, consisting of the clearings of Stephen Atwood, Miner Lewis and Henry Dominy. The only clash on the 5<sup>th</sup> occurred about midnight, when Essex militiamen in Beekmantown Corners met a similar British group while on patrol.

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, north of Beekmantown Corners, the British unexpectedly divided, the larger number proceeding directly south on the Barber Road (Durand Road). A smaller force turned east on an old road just north of Silver Creek (Rea Brook), then south on the Ashley Road to East Beekmantown. The whole right wing had been expected to come through East Beekmantown, and consequently all skirmishes on the 6<sup>th</sup> took place on that route.

General Moores took personal command of his 700 militiamen on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and they camped that night in East Beekmantown. In the evening he sent his adjutant to Plattsburgh for help. Macomb ordered Major John E. Wool with 250 regulars and Captain Luther Leonard with two cannon to march for Beekmantown. Wool and his men departed at midnight and arrived in East Beekmantown at sunrise. He took a position at a location where the Ashley Road joins Route 22 just north of East Beekmantown.

Moores sent Major Reuben Walworth and a detachment up the Ashley Road to destroy the creek bridge, but it was too late. The British interrupted Walworth, wounding and capturing two of his men. He pulled back to Wool's position, and there a serious skirmish took place.

As the British approached East Beekmantown, many of the militiamen broke. Wool and his regulars, however, contested the rest of the way into Plattsburgh by forming, firing and pulling back into a new position, repeating the movement as they pulled back.

The next stand came at the top of Culver Hill. As the British marched up the hill, in perfect formation and filling the road, militiamen behind a stone wall fired and killed instantly Lieutenant Colonel Wellington of the Buffs and Ensign John Chapman. The skirmish did not last long. Wool became eager to pull back before the British on the Barber Road could get in his rear.

Snipers harassed the British for the next two miles. The Barber Road and the Beekmantown Road contingents of the right wing reunited at Smith's Corners. Wool, the militia and, at the last minute, Aiken's Company made their final stand at Halsey's Corners, named for the Reverend Frederick Halsey, chaplain of Miller's regiment. Captain Leonard and his cannon entered into the skirmish. British bugles sounded a charge, and the Americans pulled back toward the village. In this confrontation, British Lieutenant Robert Kingsley became mortally wounded.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> the left wing advanced down the old state road (Batta Road) to Ingraham. After camping over night they continued on the 6<sup>th</sup> to march as far as Dead Creek. As the British troops broke through the barrier at the bridge, some of Macdonough's gunboats fired on them. When the British brought some of their artillery to bear, the gunboats hastily retreated. The British left and right wings joined forces somewhere near the intersection of Boynton Avenue and Route 9 in Plattsburgh, and started marching through the village.

The Americans retreated toward the direction of the two bridges over the Saranac River. The militiamen crossed the Upper (South Catherine Street) Bridge and tore up the flooring after all had crossed, using it as a fortification. The Lower (Bridge Street) Bridge, a closer call, had the flooring removed while the men came under severe fire. Aiken's Company took position in the saw mill above the bridge while they covered the workers on the bridge. Both regular and militia units along the south bank of the river further discouraged the British from crossing. Fort Brown strategically covers part of this approach from an elevated position. Most of Plattsburgh had fallen in a day.

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