

## *ABSTRACT – THE FIRST TO GREET*

*General Wellington's veterans of the Napoleonic War in Spain and southern France arrive in Canada during the summer of 1814 to join the army commanded by Governor-General Sir George Prevost in an advance across the border between Canada and the United States.*

### THE FIRST TO GREET

On August 31, 1814, Canada's Governor-General Sir George Prevost ordered the advance into New York in the form of two wings. The solid but undistinguished Baron Francis de Rottenberg took the position of second-in-command. The left wing comprised of the Second Brigade, commanded by Major General Thomas Brisbane, moved out first and used the road nearest the lake.

The Second Brigade with 3785 troops included:

1. The 13<sup>th</sup> Somerset Light Infantry. Arrived at Quebec City on June 28, 1813, from Martinique and posted on the frontier at LaColle in 1814.
2. The 49<sup>th</sup> Royal Berkshire. Arrived in St. Johns on March 19, 1814, with two companies being posted to Isle-aux-Noix on April 25, 1814.
3. DeMeuren's Swiss. Arrived in August of 1813.
4. A provincial body of light infantry including the Chasseurs and the Voltiguers.
5. During the advance 446 troops left on outpost.

The Second Brigade, camped on the north bank of the Great Chazy River, and then moved on September 4<sup>th</sup> probably through Coopersville for a junction with the right wing at Honeymoore's Corners. The army remained overnight in Chazy at the cantonment about a half mile north of the village.

On September 3, in order to insure his supply line as he moved south, Prevost ordered gunboats to occupy Isle La Motte. He paroled militiamen found there and installed a battery of three long eighteen-pound guns opposite the mouth of the Little Chazy River, to protect workers as they unloaded army supplies.

The Third Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, of New York's Detached Militia, the nearest to the scene of action, listed the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, commanded by James Green of Washington County; the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, commanded by Thomas Miller of Clinton County; and the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, commanded by Peter Vosburgh of Columbia County. Brigadier General Micajah Pettit of Washington County commanded the Third Brigade and reported to Major General Benjamin Mooers.

On the day that Brisbane crossed, Brigadier General Alexander Macomb, with the Regular Army in Plattsburgh, asked Mooers to provide militiamen for the Chazy Road to watch for the enemy and mark their route. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, the first to greet the invaders as they crossed the border would be the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Mooers called out the 40<sup>th</sup> Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Daniel Wright. A few days later sweeping authority arrived from the governor. A call extended to the militia of Saratoga, Montgomery and Schoharie Counties, however, the majority of the militia from the three counties did not reach Plattsburgh in time and returned home. The militia Macomb could count on came from the three northern counties of Clinton, Essex and Franklin. The people of Essex County gave their men a rousing send off. The first troops arrived so promptly that they quickly took positions along the probable line of advance.

Macomb sent word to Governor Chittenden in Vermont for the Vermont militia. Adhering to his earlier stand that they could not serve outside the state, Chittenden appealed to General John Newell of Charlotte, Vermont, for volunteers instead. Next Macomb dismantled Fort Izard on Cumberland Head, brought its garrison into Plattsburgh, set up his headquarters in a yellow wooden house on Bridge Street, and sent a detachment to rescue several bateaux of government provisions General Izard left at Chazy.

Two days after crossing the border the right wing of the British advanced, taking the Beekmantown Road over higher and drier ground. The wing consisted of the First and Third Brigades. The men of these brigades, for the most part veterans of the Duke of Wellington's campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula, had just arrived in North America. Undoubtedly, with the late summer arrival, Prevost came under pressure to launch a campaign. These veterans, already unhappy to be involved with a conflict in a far corner of the world after their campaigns against the French in the warm climate of Spain and southern France during the Napoleonic War, now faced possible brutal winter weather. Furthermore, history demonstrated that campaigns in the Champlain corridor needed to be launched as early as possible for the approach of winter meant a definite slowdown in logistical operations. Wellington, himself, had declined on making a trip as he prepared for further contingencies in Europe.

The First Brigade, with a total of 2495 troops, commanded by Major General Frederick Philipse Robinson, consisted of:

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion/27<sup>th</sup> Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Arrived in August and posted to Chambly.
2. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/39<sup>th</sup> Dorsetshire. Arrived on August 5<sup>th</sup> and posted to Chambly. Sixty-two men of the 39<sup>th</sup> further assigned as marines on the fleet.
3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion/76<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington's West Riding. Arrived in 1814.
4. The 88<sup>th</sup> Connaught Rangers. Arrived on August 3<sup>rd</sup> with 490 posted to Chambly on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.
5. In the advance 646 troops of the 39<sup>th</sup> and 548 of the 88<sup>th</sup> left on outpost duty.

The Third Brigade, commanded by Major General Manley Power, added another 3226. The brigade included:

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> East Kent (The Buffs). Arrived in August and posted at Chambly and LaPrairie.
2. The 5<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers. Arrived on August 7<sup>th</sup> and posted at Chambly and Sorel.
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/27<sup>th</sup> Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Arrived in August and posted in Montreal.
4. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion/58<sup>th</sup> Rutlandshire. Arrived on August 9<sup>th</sup> and posted in Montreal.
5. In support of the brigades, the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons and an artillery brigade. The artillery consisted of 5-6Pr., 2-24 Pr., 1-5.5”Howitzer and Congreve rockets. The dragoons mustered 309 troops while the artillery contained another 536.
6. Native Americans in the brigades numbered about 200.

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