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**“A POOR BUT HONEST SODGER:” COLONEL  
CROMWELL PEARCE THE 16TH U.S.  
INFANTRY, AND THE WAR OF 1812.**

Pennsylvania's best known contribution to the War of 1812 was the 22nd Infantry Regiment which gained lasting renown while attached to General Winfield Scott's brigade during the 1814 Niagara campaign. The 22nd established itself as one of the most effective units in the American army, and under Colonel Hugh Brady it rendered distinguished service in such sanguine encounters as Chippewa, Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie.<sup>1</sup> These combat honors are preserved in the battle streamers of the present-day 2nd Infantry, the lineal descendant of the old 22nd which was disbanded in 1815. However, closer examination will reveal that not all the War of 1812 streamers were garnered by the 22nd alone. It is a little known fact that Pennsylvania also contributed two other infantry regiments to the military establishment, one of which, the 16th U.S. Infantry, acquired a distinguished military reputation in its own right.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this unit and its controversial colonel were eclipsed publicly by the 22nd and remain to this day an enigmatic legacy of the War of 1812. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to address a long-standing historical omission and call to the attention of posterity the accomplishments of an outstanding army regiment and its commander.

The Sixteenth U.S. Infantry was commanded by Colonel Cromwell Pearce, of Chester county, Pennsylvania, who led it for the duration of the war and across such hotly contested battlefields as York, Chrysler's Farm and Lyon's Creek. Aged forty, Pearce was endowed with an imposing, soldierly mien, described by one contemporary as "an uncommonly stout man, six feet-two inches in height, erect and well proportioned."<sup>3</sup> Born on August 13, 1772, the descendant of hardy

Scotch-Irish immigrants from Inniskillen, he was raised on his fathers' farm and obtained no other education "than the imperfect and defective kind generally attended to the youth of the agricultural districts."<sup>4</sup> But a keen martial instinct manifested itself in the young man as, overcoming this handicap, Pearce was commissioned a militia captain in 1793 and later in lieutenantancy in the short-lived 10th U.S. Infantry from May 1799 to June, 1800. Eventually, he rose to the rank of Major General, Third Division, Pennsylvania militia, and was serving in this capacity when hostilities were re-commenced against Great Britain in 1812.

Considering his long association with military affairs, as well as the acute lack of experienced officers, Pearce was singularly qualified for a regular army commission. Accordingly, on July 27, 1812, he obtained from President Madison the appointment as colonel of the 16th U.S. Infantry, then recruiting in eastern Pennsylvania. Summer was passed busily mustering and training recruits in the native state, but by September Pearce had led his battalion to the Canadian border, initiating a sojourn that found him once wounded, twice acting brigadier on the field of battle, and by war's end the senior officer commanding the entire Niagara frontier! Undoubtedly, Pearce would have been an accomplished officer in any army, but what sets him apart from his American contemporaries was the highly attentive care he paid towards the lives and well-being of his men. No mere martinet, he rigorously oversaw all matters pertaining to discipline, camp police, and morale. It was a policy that won him the loyalty of his soldiers and the respect of his fellow officers. Throughout the ensuing campaigns in Canada, the Colonel of the 16th proved himself an exceedingly dutiful soldier, conscientious and uncomplaining, and one who rendered valuable service to both his country and its cause. But fate has played something of a cruel hoax on Cromwell Pearce. Nowhere, in any account of the War of 1812 written to date, has his participation been acknowledged or even mentioned. Like his entire generation of soldiers, he remains yet another perennial unknown from the War of 1812. Therefore, one should approach his "Biographical Memoir" with an appreciation of the bitterness and military pride of one "whose deeds have been inaccurately or imperfectly recounted, and are now scarcely remembered."<sup>5</sup>

Because narratives from the War of 1812 are so terribly under-represented, Pearce's "Biographical Memoir" is important because it proffers rare but detailed glimpses into a soldier's life at this period. His is an account replete with descriptions of suffering, hardship, and disaster, leavened throughout with the universal comradeship of men in arms. Furthermore, he was an astute military observer and provides

new information on such little known battles as York, Fort George and Chrysler's Farm. But in this Pearce exposes a human dimension which transcends the heroic. While impartial as to the flow of battlefield events, Pearce constantly exudes vexation over the lack of recognition given to him and his regiment in official reports and distortions found in the memoirs of others. It is a theme constantly invoked by the author, but Pearce possessed the acumen to enlist official documentation to support his claims. But regardless of this indignation, Pearce's tour with the 16th Infantry is important to historians of the War of 1812 because he labored to provide, in his own words, “a detailed history of the service of that regiment to which on two or three occasions injustice has been done . . . carefully prepared by its commander for the gratification of his friends—and the vindication of himself, as well as the gallant men under his charge.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is time to award both the colonel and his regiment the recognition denied them by happenstance, for our understanding of the military aspects of 1812 will be enhanced by an appreciation of the role which Cromwell Pearce and the 16 Infantry played in it.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE 16TH REGIMENT

“The 16th Regiment U.S. Infantry, commanded by Colonel Cromwell Pearce, marched from Grey's Ferry encampment, near Philadelphia, on the 14th of September, 1812; and, passing through Philadelphia, Frankfort, Trenton and Princeton, encamped at New Brunswick, New Jersey, on the 18th. On the 19th it embarked in sloops, and proceeded down the Raritan. The weather being boisterous, the sloops anchored in the harbor of New York. On the 20th, the wind being favorable, the sloops sailed for Greenbush, near Albany, where they arrived on the 23rd of September; distant from Philadelphia 260 miles. Major General Dearborn<sup>7</sup> and Brigadier General Chandler<sup>8</sup> were in command at this post. Here we were joined by Captain Lyon's company, which constituted a part of the regiment. We remained at Greenbush until the 18th of October, during which time the officers were assiduously employed in drilling and disciplining the troops. On the 18th we took up our line of march, —proceeding by way of Troy, Lansingburgh, Waterford, Stillwater, Sandy Hill, &c. and arrived at White Hall (formerly called Skeenesborough) on the 22nd. This town is situated at the head of Lake Champlain, and is 70 miles from Albany. On the same day, we embarked on flat-bottomed boats & pursued our course down Lake Champlain,—passing Ticonderoga, Crown Point, &c. to Plattsburgh, where we arrived on the 26th of October. This town, the capital of Clinton County, is situated on the river Saranac, 63 miles from Montreal, and 112 north of White Hall, N.Y. We encamped on the bank of the river Saranac,

on the west side of the bay. There were assembled here about 6,000 regulars and militia, forming two brigades; the first brigade command by General Bloomfield,<sup>9</sup> the 2nd by General Chandler. The whole force was commanded by Major General Dearborn, by whom we were reviewed. On the 16th November, the army advanced towards the British lines by way of Chazy, and encamped two miles east of the village of Champlain, on the evening of the 17th. The troops having marched without their tents, or camp equipage, we made preparations to remain here a few days; erected temporary huts composed of Spruce branches, and cleared away the timber for a parade ground. On the evening of the 19th, sent out a scouting party of 200 infantry, who returned in the morning, having seen no enemy. On the evening of the 20th, Colonel Pike,<sup>10</sup> with his regiment, Captain Smith's company of cavalry, and some militia, amounting in all to about 600 men—marched to attack an advanced guard of the enemy at the river La Colle, 8 miles distant. About 2 O'clock in the morning, Colonel Pike met the enemy,—and after two or three discharges, they retreated into a swamp. The Colonel burnt their barracks and blockhouses and returned—having six men wounded—two of them mortally. This was an advance guard of a very considerable force, which lay a few miles in the rear. During this night it snowed considerably, and the wounded were brought in on sleds. When the firing of Colonel Pike's party was heard, General Chandler galloped into camp, exclaiming in a loud voice—"Where is Colonel Pearce?" At that time, Colonel Pearce was lying under a spruce bush, wrapped in a rug. He immediately arose, shook the snow off, and ordered the troops to be paraded. As soon as the cause of the firing was known, they were dismissed.

On the 22nd, at an early hour, we were ordered to cook three days provisions. This order produced great joy—each regiment supposing, of course, that Montreal was our destination. At 10 O'clock, A.M. when all was ready, our route was announced for Plattsburgh, which occasioned much murmuring among the troops. On the 23rd we encamped in the woods on Lake Champlain, two miles south of Plattsburgh, and remained there until the 28th, when we marched four and a half miles to the south branch of the Saranac, encamped in the Pine Forrests, cleared the ground, and made preparations to build huts. During the whole of this march, and a part of the time while employed clearing the ground, the troops lay on the bare earth, exposed to the rain and storms, without tents, or any covering except their blankets and the branches of the trees. Here commenced the ruinous and disgraceful practice of officers obtaining furloughs, immediately on the army entering winter quarters, in order that they might spend the remainder of the winter in the cities. In the mean time, the soldiers were deprived of that care so essential to subordination; contracted bad habits; and in many cases, when disease pervaded whole regiments, officers could not be found to give such directions as were necessary not only for the health of the men, but for the safety of the troops. This practice of leaving brave soldiers exposed and unprotected, during the severity of winter, was too common—from the Generals to the subalterns. Before the ground was cleared to build the huts, every General and Field officer had left the post; except Colonels Pike and Pearce. At the commencement of building the huts, Colonel Pike was taken sick, and went to Plattsburgh. At his return, the huts were nearly completed. The whole superintendence of clearing the ground, building the

barracks &c. had devolved on Colonel Pearce. On the 25th of December, the barracks being finished, the soldiers were comfortably lodged in their quarters; the sickness began to decrease; and the men resumed their health and spirits.

After the recovery of Colonel Pike, his regiment (the 15th) was organized and disciplined in three ranks. The rear was armed with short muskets, slung over the shoulder, and a pike 8 feet long. Several hundred snow shoes were procured to accustom the soldiers to walk on the snow. These experiments were tried, and found not to answer the purposes anticipated.

It being reported that the British meditated an attack at Sackett's Harbor, to destroy the fleet, Colonel Pike received orders to repair there, with the force under his command. On the 4th of March, Colonel Pike and his own regiment left Saranac cantonment, in sleighs, for Sackett's Harbor,—directing Colonel Pearce, with the remainder of the troops, to follow as soon as the means of transportation could be procured. On the 9th, Colonel Pearce and the 16th Regiment took up line of march for Sackett's Harbor by way of Robinson's, Chateau-gay Four Corners, Malone, Hopkinton, Pottsdam, De Kalb, Indian River, Black River, Watertown, and Brownsville. During the greater part of this movement of 176 miles, the snow was three to four feet deep, and it continued snowing six days. The cold was intense, and the soldiers suffered extremely. We met a number of loaded sleighs going to the *British*.<sup>11</sup> On the 17th we left the sleighs and marched 8 miles to Black river,—and encamped one mile east of Sackett's Harbor. At this place shanties, resembling the most indifferent cow-sheds, were prepared for the troops. These sheds being perfectly open, were warmed by building large fires in front of them. March 25th the troops removed to their log barracks. Colonel Pike, being appointed Brigadier-General, assumed the command of the post; and Colonel Pearce that of the cantonment. There were assembled, at Sackett's Harbor, about 4000 regulars and marines. About this time, active preparations were being made for *the expedition*.

The 6th, 15th and 16th Regiments of Infantry were organized in one brigade, commanded by General Pike: the 6th on the right, the 16th on the left, and the 15th in the centre. One company of Light artillery, one company of the 14th Infantry, a detachment of the 21st Infantry, Forsyth's Rifle Corps and the New York and Baltimore Volunteers; total 1700 men. A few days before the departure of the fleet, General Dearborn arrived. On the 23rd, the ice having disappeared, so that the fleet was able to leave the harbor, the troops embarked in a squadron of thirteen vessels, commanded by Commodore Chauncey.<sup>12</sup> At 10 O'clock, A.M., made sail and cleared the bay. After a few hours sail the wind suddenly changed and commenced blowing a violent gale. There being the appearance of a stormy night, the squadron returned to the harbor. April 24th, the storm continued and the fleet remained at anchor,—no communication allowed with the shore. April 25th, the wind being fair, at 8 o'clock, A.M., weighed anchor and stood out. April 26th, light breezes from the North-East. At 5 O'clock P.M., we were 25 miles south of York light house. All commanding officers of Corps summoned on board the ship Madison. Being within three miles of York Harbor, the fleet lay off and on. April 27th, at half past 5 O'clock, by signals stood for shore. At 6 O'clock, A.M., anchored one half mile there from and within one mile and a half of the fort. At 7 O'clock, A.M., by signals began to disembark,—each vessel having been previously supplied with small boats for

that purpose. At 8 O'clock A.M., the boats—being filled with Forsyth's<sup>13</sup> Rifle Corps and some of the 15th and 16th Regiments of Infantry—rowed towards the shore. It was intended to land in an open field, where a few acres of ground had been cleared (the site of the old French Fort Toronto): but the violence of the winds compelled the boats to approach the shore below it. From this open field, the road passes through the woods to the first battery; and from that the ground is cleared to the town of Little York,—distant about one mile: the enemy had constructed batteries to command this road. The enemy's troops were seen emerging from the woods, marching and forming the open field. They consisted of 400 regulars, 300 militia and about 200 Indians,—the regulars occupying the centre, and the militia and Indians the flanks. Our landing was covered by the fire of our schooners,—which served to frighten the militia and Indians, and prevent the regulars from forming on the plain. Our boats were now steadily rowing the shore; and being full of men received a deadly fire from the enemy, who advanced to the waters edge, and fired into the boats. This served only to quicken our approach; and as soon as the boats touched ground, our troops sprang into the water—waded to the shore—rushed up the beach—and returned the enemy's fire. Now, nothing was to be heard but an incessant rattle of small arms. The British regulars advanced with charged bayonet; but the concentrated fire of our troops soon compelled them to fall back. When the Infantry landed, they were formed in platoons. General Pike directed them to charge the enemy,—who immediately retreated, and were rapidly pursued by our troops. The woods now enveloped both parties. Nothing could be heard but the shouts of the rival combatants, the war-whoop of the savages and the echo of the bugles, mingling with the scattered reports of the musketry. Thus, for some minutes, were our troops opposed victoriously to more than twice their number, while the boats were returning for, and conveying reinforcements; who, soon as they landed dashed into the woods to assist their comrades,—and, in a few minutes, the firing entirely ceased. The schooners, after having landed the troops, anchored in the bay and commenced a heavy fire on the battery. About 10 O'clock A.M. when the troops were forming in the open plain, the enemy's battery, nearest the lake, exploded with a tremendous noise. At 11 O'clock, the artillery having landed, the troops commenced their march toward the town,—having a swamp and thick wood on their right and left; and had advanced about half a mile, when they received several discharges, from an 18-pounder at the battery recently exploded. This battery was hastily thrown up, a few days previous, and was in an unfinished state. It mounted two long 18 pounders: one commanded the road in which the column was advancing; the other, the harbor. By the explosion of this battery in the morning, the gun that commanded the road was dismounted, and 25 to 30 of the enemy were killed. The other gun of this battery was raised on a platform and could not be brought to bear on the column in the road. The only injury it did was cutting off some of the muskets of the advancing column. The troops advanced; and the few who remained in this battery were made prisoners. The column had proceeded about one fourth of a mile, and had arrived at a second battery, which was deserted, and within 400 yards of the magazine, in full view of the town. Not seeing the enemy, General Pike ordered the column to halt, and the artillery, which was drawn by soldiers, to be brought in front to fire into the principle fort, to discover where the enemy were. At this time, while some Riflemen who had advanced from the rear with a

British sergeant, spoke to General Pike, who was standing near the head of the brigade. At this instant the magazine exploded. Colonel Pearce was sitting on a stump facing General Pike, who was about 15 paces distant. Seeing the general wounded, Colonel Pearce went to him and assisted in removing him. General Pike observed that he was mortally wounded, and that Colonel Pearce must take command of the troops. Thirty eight men were killed, and 222 wounded—many of them mortally: among the latter, the lamented General Pike—who was wounded on the side while questioning the British Sergeant.<sup>14</sup>

The command now devolved on Colonel Pearce, as the senior officer. The troops, giving three cheers, advanced, and the enemy, losing all hope, set fire to their naval store house, also to a ship on the stocks, and then made a final retreat.<sup>15</sup> The dense volumes of smoke which blew violently in our faces, rendered it impossible to proceed for some minutes. The commanding officer deemed it proper to send two of his officers to obtain the necessary information and to demand immediate surrender of the town. They were met by persons authorized by the citizens of York and the terms of capitulation agreed on.<sup>15</sup> They were in substance that the citizens and their private property should be protected and that all public property should be delivered to the commanding officer, and that all the troops,—regular and militia—to be surrendered as prisoners of war. These terms of capitulation were signed by the parties, delivered to Colonel Pearce, and the commanding officer took possession of York.<sup>16</sup>

The brigade had halted and the officers directed to secure the public property. Colonel Pearce was engaged in superintending the removal of the public stores when General Dearborn rode up and asked Colonel Pearce what had been done. The colonel delivered to him the terms of capitulation and the General immediately rode off without speaking or issuing an order that day. The brigade returned to the fort and the guards were detailed for the night. At this time the sun had nearly set and a heavy rain commenced. The soldiers had been in active service since four O'clock in the morning until sunset during which time they had eaten nothing,—many of them had leaped from the boats into 3 feet of water and waded to shore. From the time when General Pike was wounded, the whole responsibility of the army on shore devolved on Colonel Pearce, who had every guard stationed and sentinel posted which was not finished until late at night.<sup>16</sup>

About 11 O'clock the next day, the drums were beating to arms,—and when the commanding officer came and demanded who ordered the drums to beat, an aid of General Dearborn advanced, appearing much agitated, and said *he* heard,—that the British were coming. The commanding officer replied,—“Let them come, we are ready for them”—and ordered the drums to cease beating. The aid ran in great haste to General Dearborn & brought an order to parade the troops. This was the first order given by General Dearborn, after the arrival of the army in Canada. The troops were accordingly formed and marched in the direction whence the enemy were said to be advancing,—General Dearborn walking in the rear, with his hands behind his back, and his staff in his hands. After proceeding a short distance, the troops halted; and Colonel Pearce observed to General Dearborn that he did not think the enemy were advancing. The General assented, and agreed to return; when the troops were marched to their quarters. The public property found in York was considerable; consisting of

cannon, clothing, provisions, &c. and a part of General Sheaffe's baggage, including a handsome assortment of wines,—which, no doubt, were highly relished at Head Quarters.<sup>16</sup>

REPORT OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED OF THE  
UNITED STATES TROOPS,  
AT THE CAPTURE OF YORK, UPPER CANADA.

April 29, 1813      Signed, *Charles S. Hunter* Brigade Major

General Staff: Wounded, 1 Brigadier General (since dead), and his aides; total 4. *Sixth* Regiment of Infantry: *Killed* by explosion, 1 Sergeant, 2 Corporals, 10 privates. *Wounded* by explosion: 4 Captains, 2 Subalterns, 5 Sergeants, 5 Corporals, 88 privates total 177. *Fifteenth* Regiment: *Killed* by ball, 1 lieutenant, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 1 Privates; by explosions, 1 Sergeant, 2 Corporals, 6 Privates. *Wounded* by ball, 1 Captain (since dead) 1 Subaltern, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 3 Privates; by explosion, 1 Sergeant, 24 Privates; total 46. *Sixteenth* Regiment: *Killed* by ball, 1 private; by explosion, 1 Captain, 4 Privates. *Wounded* by ball, 2 Privates; by explosion, 1 Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, 2 Corporals, 27 Privates; total 40. Captain Brook's Artillery: *Killed* by explosion, 3 Privates. *Wounded* by explosion, 1 Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, 13 Privates; total 19. Detachment of 21st Regiment: *Killed* by explosion, 1 Sergeant. *Wounded* by explosion, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 11 Privates, total; 14. One company of 14th Regiment: *Killed*, by explosion, 1 Sergeant. *Wounded by explosion*, 1 Musician, 3 Privates; total 5. *Light Artillery*: *Killed by explosion*, 3 Privates. *Wounded by explosion*, 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 16 Privates; total 21. Volunteers: *Killed* by explosion, 2 Privates. *Wounded by explosion*, 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Corporal, 1 Privates; total 7. Rifle Battalion: *Killed* by ball, 1 Sergeant, 2 Musicians, 5 Privates; by explosion, 1 Private. *Wounded* by ball, 1 Captain, 2 Sergeants, 3 Corporals, 17 Privates; by explosion, 1 Private, Total; 33.

Total, *Killed* by ball, 14  
Do by explosion 38-*Killed*, 52.  
Wounded by ball 32  
Do by explosion 222-Wounded 254  
306

Officers Killed, Capt. Lyon of the 16th Infantry,  
Lieut. Bloomfield, 15th Infantry

Officers mortally wounded, Brigadier General Pike,

Officers wounded by ball, 2 Captains, 1 Lieutenant,

Do by explosion, 6 Captain, 6 Lieutenants,

Colonel Cromwell Pearce wounded in the shoulder,—not included in the report.<sup>17</sup>

General Zebulon M. Pike died of his wounds on board one of the vessels of the fleet, about sun down, on the day of the battle. This brave and accomplished officer was universally lamented by the army. So entirely did the responsibility devolve on Colonel Pearce, that, the day after the battle, the report of Lieutenant Hayden of the fatigue party, which buried the dead, was made to Colonel Pearce; and on the subsequent day, the report of the killed and wounded by Brigade Major Hunter was made to Colonel Pearce and not to General Dearborn. This report has not been before published. The enemy's loss was

about 100 killed, and a like number wounded,—not including those who were surrendered and discharged on parole. A human *scalp* was found suspended in the Legislature Hall near the Speaker’s chair, an emblem of the manner and spirit in which his Britannic Majesty carried on the war.

Throughout the whole of the day, the officers and soldiers displayed the greatest courage considering that this was their first engagement with the enemy. Their coolness and intrepidity were deserving of all praise. At all times the orders of the officers were executed with alacrity and a determination which nothing could withstand. Although the dead and wounded were strewn about them but one spirit animated them viz. the fixed determination of overcoming every obstacle and hoisting the *Stars and Stripes* on the ramparts of the enemy.<sup>18</sup> The magazine was considerably below the surface of the ground and contained 500 kegs of powder. It was lined to keep the powder dry and arched with large stones. A slow match was applied to the magazine so that it should explode when the enemy had retired out of danger. The noise of the explosion was tremendous. The earth shook and the sun was darkened, while the crashing of the rocks, high in the air, and the groans of the wounded, rendered it one of the most awful sights in nature. In General Dearborn’s report to the Secretary of War, dated April 28, 1813, he states that “every movement was under his view”<sup>19</sup> In this place, we may remark, that it was possible, from the nature of the ground and the woods, that General Dearborn could see the army at the first battery; and as to the “view”,—it is probable that, with the sailors and marines on board the fleet, he may have viewed the contest. General Dearborn admits, however, that he had confided “the immediate command of the troops in action to General Pike.” The report says that “previous to the explosion the enemy had retired into the town, excepting a party of regular troops which did not retire early enough to avoid the shock; it is said that upwards of forty of them were destroyed”. The “view” of General Dearborn must have been very imperfect; as it is well known that not an individual of the enemy was killed by the explosion referred to. Two hours before that explosion, about thirty of the enemy were killed at the first battery. It is obvious that this mistake originated by confounding two events entirely distinct.<sup>20</sup>

The report, after mentioning the death of General Pike, &c. proceeds to state that “the outlines of a capitulation were agreed on”—without mentioning when, or by whom. These outlines of capitulation were agreed to, and signed by the officers selected by Colonel Pearce, the Commanding officer, and the Committee appointed by the citizens of York. Several hours afterwards, General Dearborn rode up; and the outlines, or terms of capitulation, were then handed to him by Colonel Pearce. This was the only time that General Dearborn was seen by the commanding officer, on that day; and no order was issued by the general on that day,—nor until 11 O’clock of the 28th. The capitulation reported by General Dearborn on the 28th is merely an enlargement of the terms previously agreed on, and signed in the name of Colonel Pearce, on the 27th. The object of General Dearborn was to conceal the name of the officer upon whom the command and responsibility devolved, on the fall of General Pike.& And we are therefore informed that “as soon as General Dearborn learned that General Pike was wounded”, he “went on shore”,—leaving it to be inferred that General Dearborn assumed the command, and attended to the duties consequent upon

the fall of General Pike; the incorrectness of which has been already shewn. Commodore Chauncey, indeed, in his report to the Secretary of the Navy, says that "inconsequence of the fall of General Pike, the command of the troops devolved for a time upon Colonel Pearce, who soon after took possession of the town." The "Time" here spoken of, included all the events above referred to.

In the *Portfolio* for August, 1815, is a Biographical Memoir of General Ripley, which contains several passages at variance with fact; and which we shall take occasion to correct, as we proceed with this historical sketch.<sup>21</sup> In that memoir, we are informed that the 21st Regiment (Ripley's) "was among the first selected and attached to General Pike's brigade." To this naked assertion we have merely to give an unqualified denial. General Pike's brigade consisted of the 6th, 15th and 16th Regiments. There was only a detachment of the 21st Regiment at Little York. This detachment, and one company of the 14th composed the Reserve.<sup>22</sup> It is further stated that Forsyth's corps of Riflemen "drove the enemy's light troops in the woods, during which time the main body formed on the beach under a fire from the batteries, and moved in close column to attack the principal fort." Now the fact is, our landing was covered by the fire of our schooners. The enemy had no batteries within half a mile of the beach where the main body formed, not a cannon was fired. We are told also that "the arrangements for an assault was made when it was perceived that the enemy had abandoned his position and was formed a mile in the rear of it. The troopers immediately thronged into the works, when the awful explosion of the magazine took place." "During the few moments of confusion that ensued, the enemy called in his detached parties and was seen in concentrated force in the town. Colonel Ripley, who had been wounded in the explosion, pressed the officer on whom the temporary command devolved, to advance immediately upon him; a delay in so doing enabled him to make a precipitate retreat." If by "the works" or "principal Fort", is meant the battery nearest the lake, the statement is altogether incorrect. The troops had passed the first battery, and had arrived at the second—which was slightly constructed, and deserted—when the explosion took place. Colonel *Ripley* did *not* *Press* "the officer on whom the temporary command devolved to advance, &c" for the very sufficient reason that he had not an opportunity. Colonel *Pearce* was *in front*; Colonel *Ripley* was with the reserves, *in the rear*; and was left on the battle ground when the remainder of the troops entered the town.

Under all circumstances of that day,—the landing from the boats under a heavy fire from the enemy, a number of the boats unable to land—the soldiers obliged to leap into the water, and waded to shore (Colonel Pearce, himself reached the shore in this manner)—the fighting in the woods—forming on the plain, and advancing to the first and second batteries—the awful explosion of the magazine—the badness of the roads, the distance, the fatigue,—these obstacles altogether were so gallantly overcome by our little band, as to even astonish the Enemy; and won the admiration of every impartial man. The enemy were informed of all our movements, and had made the necessary arrangements. There were no dragoons with our army; and if General Pike was acquainted with the roads, fortifications &c. of Little York, Colonel Pearce had not an opportunity to learn the nature of its defenses. Directly after the explosion of the magazine, the enemy made a final retreat. Our troops formed and advanced; but

the volumes of smoke, which blew directly in their faces, rendered it impracticable to proceed for some minutes; when the commanding officer deemed it proper to send a flag to demand the immediate surrender of the town—which was accordingly done, and took possession of it.

After the public property had been removed, the fort destroyed, the troops, on the first of May, embarked in the fleet, which remained in York Harbor until the 8th, in consequence of a violent storm; on which day it sailed to Four Mile Creek, on the American shore, about four miles east of Fort Niagara—where the troops landed and encamped. On the 21st Colonel Dennis arrived with Captain’s Davenport’s and McElroy’s companies of the 16th Regiment. From the arrival of the army at this place, until the 26th, we were making preparations to attack Fort George. The First brigade consisted of the 6th, 15th and 16th Regiments of Infantry; and was now commanded by General Boyd.<sup>23</sup> The light troops,—consisting of the artillery, Forysth’s Rifle corps and two companies of the 22nd commanded by Colonel Scott, led the advance. General Winder<sup>24</sup> commanded the Second brigade and General Chandler the Third Brigade. About 1 O’clock in the morning of the 27th, Forts Niagara & George, and the batteries commenced a tremendous cannonade; and at sunrise the troops embarked in the boats. Having passed about one mile beyond the point of land on which Fort Niagara stands, the entire flotilla displayed [sic] on the lake, a considerable distance from the designed place of landing, and opposite thereto. The first brigade occupied the left of the line, being 4 or 5 boats in depth. Commodore Chauncey’s squadron now proceeded and took their station along the shore, and commenced a heavy fire on the batteries. At half past O’clock, the signal was made and the flotilla moved forward in line. The place where it was intended to land was about one mile west of the mouth of the Niagara river. The bank was from six to ten feet high, and the ground cleared and open about 12 yards from the river,—beyond which space it was covered brush and underwood. Here the enemy lay concealed. Colonel Scott<sup>25</sup> and his command had not yet reached the shore, when a most severe fire of musketry was opened on them. They landed, however, formed, and advanced; when they were immediately charged by the enemy down the bank and driven to the water’s edge. At this moment the First brigade landed under a heavy fire. Colonel Scott’s corps, covering themselves under the bank, continued a severe fire, the enemy secreting themselves behind stumps and underwood. Every nerve was now strained in rowing all the boats to the shore. Some of the boats of the First Brigade had reached the shore, when the enemy again lined the bank, and from their right poured into the boats several heavy discharges of musketry, which was very fatal on the 16th Regiment,—it occupying the extreme left. On this occasion we were greeted with shells of a new construction, called sphericals,<sup>26</sup> containing from 100 to 150 musket balls, which wounded many of the soldiers and injured several of the boats. The first brigade having landed and formed on the beach, under several deadly and galling discharges from the enemy, their officers next endeavored, every exertion, to bring them to the charge; but our well directed fire being followed by a gallant charge on our part, they retired broken and discomfited. The troops gave three cheers and formed in order of battle; when, being joined by Chandler’s and Winder’s brigades, the whole were halted on the open plain. The enemy had advanced their artillery on the plain, and opened on

us a few heavy discharges. As soon as our artillery was brought, and commenced firing, they were immediately silenced. The army then proceeded, and arrived in the rear of Fort George. In a few moments an officer came out and surrendered the place. The British flag was lowered and replaced with the Stars and Stripes. The brigades, after a slight repast, resumed their march and proceeded to within a mile of Queenstown Heights, near to where the dragoons had crossed, when, no enemy being seen, we returned and encamped on the plain, near the fort. Thus, in the midst of *Generals* with a superior force—two brigades having scarcely fired a shot—the afternoon was trifled away, the enemy suffered to escape, and annoy us the remainder of the season.

Official Account of the Killed and Wounded at the capture of Fort George, May 27, 1813.<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant Hobart, and 38 non-commissioned officers and privates *killed*. Six commissioned, and 105 non-commissioned officers and privates *wounded*. Of this number, there were of the 16th Regiment 1 Sergeant and 10 privates *killed*; Captain Steel, Lieutenant Finch and 9 non-commissioned officers and privates *wounded*.

*Enemy's Loss*

*Killed*, 108. Prisoners, wounded, 1 Colonel, 3 Subalterns, 7 Sergeants 152 rank and file Prisoners *not wounded*, 1 Captain, 1 Subaltern, 1 Surgeon, 102 rank and file.

*Ten days after the battle, General Dearborn hastened to make the following singularly brief and imperfect report of it:*<sup>27</sup>

Head Quarters, 8 June, 1813

“Sir,

I hasten to state to you that the whole of our officers and men discovered, in the action of the 27th, that steadiness and ardor for action, which evinced a determination to do honor to themselves and their country. The animating examples set by Colonel Scott and by General Boyd, deserve particular mention. I am greatly indebted to Colonel Porter of the Light Artillery, to Major Armistead of the Third Artillery Regiment, and the Lieutenant Totten of the Engineer corps, for their judicious and skillful execution in demolishing the enemy's batteries. The officers of the artillery generally who had the direction of the guns are very deserving.

Hon. Gen. Armstrong

I have the honor to be &c.

“Sec. of War.”

H. Dearborn<sup>\*</sup>

The troops having brought nothing with them, except their knapsacks, had to remain exposed without their tents or baggage, until the afternoon of the next day, when it rained violently. Authentic information being received that the British had taken position at the Forty Mile Creek, near the head of the lake, and about equal distance from York and Fort George, Generals Chandler and Winder, with a part of the troops, commenced their march to that place,—taking with them six days provisions. At this time there was no field officer with the 16th Regiment, and it was commanded by Captain Steele. Colonel Pearce was ill in consequence of the recent exposure, and it was the first time he had been absent from the Regiment for a single hour, since it left Grey's Ferry

encampment. Lieutenant Colonel Dennis, who had been two weeks on the frontier, had obtained leave of absence on urgent business. At the same time, several other officers obtained leave of absence, for similar urgent reasons.

The troops having arrived in the neighborhood of the enemy on the evening of the 5th of June, were attacked about 2 O'clock in the morning of the 6th. Generals Winder and Chandler, and several officers (including Captain Steele and McEwen of 16th Regiment) were taken prisoners.<sup>29</sup> On the next day, the troops fell back ten miles and on the 9th returned to Fort George. General Lewis,<sup>30</sup> in his report to the Secretary of War, June 14, 1813, speaks favorably of the conduct of several regiments and corps,—their gallantry having “Saved the army”. He names several officers who distinguished themselves; and to one of them he devoted the following paragraph:

“Lieutenant M’Chesney’s gallantry recovered a place of artillery and prevented the capture of others. He merits promotion for it.”<sup>31</sup>

Although Lieutenant M’Chesney’s gallant charge recovered the piece of artillery and prevented the capture of others General Lewis does not name *the regiment* to which this detachment belonged. Other regiments, and a part of a regiment, are named but in this case, where there is special cause, the name of the 16th Regiment is omitted. It is a truth that the bravery of this regiment, and this detachment, was as instrumental in saving the army as any of those that are named.

On the 24th of June, Lieutenant Colonel Boerstler, with a detachment of the 14 Regiment, 1 company of Light Artillery, 1 company of the 6th Regiment, and a small detachment of Light Dragoons, left Fort George for the Beaver Dams; and on the same day, the whole party was captured by the British.<sup>32</sup>

During the sickness of the commander of the 16th Regiment Major Cummings, a valuable officer of the 8th, who had come to the frontier for more active service, was placed in command of the 16th. On the 1st of July, Colonel Pearce recovered sufficiently to resume the command. July 15, General Dearborn, agreeable to orders, retired from the army, and the command devolved upon Brigadier General Boyd. July 30, Brigadier General D.R. Williams<sup>33</sup> of South Carolina arrived, and assumed the command of a brigade, of which the 16th Regiment formed a part. On the 7th and 17th of August, our pickets were attacked and driven in by the British and their allies, the Indians. Reinforcements were sent out and after some skirmishing, the enemy retreated. Several men were killed and wounded on both sides. On the 13th, a body of volunteers and militia arrived under the command of General Peter B. Porter,<sup>34</sup> and a plan was adopted to attack one of the enemy’s pickets. The volunteers and friendly Indians were commanded by Major Chaplin,<sup>35</sup> and the regulars by Major Cumming of the 16th Regiment. General Porter volunteered his services. This skirmish was successful; and our troops returned with 12 Indians, and a few regular prisoners. Our loss was trifling. The regulars and volunteers fought and behaved well.<sup>36</sup>

On the [—] of [—] General Wilkinson<sup>37</sup> arrived, Brigadier General Williams, began immediately to return to South Carolina, relinquished the command of the brigade,—having been on the frontier about six weeks. Preparations were

now being made for another *expedition*. About the 27th of September, the army embarked. Captain Davenport's company of the 16th Regiment remained to proceed by land, on account of the want of means of transportation. We arrived at Sackett's Harbor on the 9th of October, after a very stormy and dangerous passage down the lake. The following is the substance of the General Order, announcing the organization of the army. It is to be formed in *four brigades*, and a *reserve*. *The First Brigade to be composed of the 5th, 13th and 12th Regiments*, under the command of Brigadier General Boyd; the *Second Brigade to consist of the 6th, the 22nd and 15th Regiments*, under the command of General Brown,<sup>38</sup> the *Third Brigade to consist of the 9th, 25th and 16th Regiments*, commanded by Brigadier General Covington,<sup>39</sup> and the *Fourth Brigade, of the 11th, 21st and 14th Regiments*, under Brigadier General Swartwout.<sup>40</sup> The *Reserve*, under Colonel Macomb,<sup>41</sup> to be composed of his own Regiment, and the detachments ordered to join. This corps, the Dragoons, and the Rifle Corps, will be disposed of as circumstances may render necessary, under special orders of the General. The Artillery has been assigned to, and will be posted by Brigadier General Moses Porter.<sup>42</sup> On the 19th, Brigadier General Covington assumed the command of his brigade. October 18th, the 16th Regiment embarked for Grenadier Island; the weather boisterous and rainy; several of the boats were blown ashore and wrecked on Point Penninsula, situation between Sackett's Harbor and Grenadier Island. We remained here two or three days. On the 24th, nearly all the army had arrived on the Island. The rain continued, accompanied with violent gales. The troops were in a deplorable condition without a dry place to lie on, or straw for beds.<sup>43</sup> November 1. The advance reached French Creek, 18 miles and are attacked by the British gun boats. Capitan M'Pherson, having constructed a battery on the shore, they were compelled to retire. Our loss 2 killed, 4 wounded. The loss of the enemy supposed to be considerable. 3rd. The troops all arrived. 4th Snowed. 5th. The flotilla fell down and landed near Morrisville, where we remained all night. 6th. Prepared to pass Prescott, a few miles below; a strong post of the enemy mounting a number of heavy cannon. Every man able to march, except those necessary to man the boats, to proceed by land, and keep opposite the boats. About 8 or 9 O'clock, p.m. we were favored with a heavy fog, and commenced our movement hoping to pass unobserved; but some of our "Blue Light" friends gave the signal.\* The batteries now commenced firing on our front boats; and continued it without intermission, until the last boat was out of their reach. Although the armament amounted to 300 boats, only one man was killed, and two wounded; and one boat slightly injured. 7th. Fell down slowly,—the corps under Colonel Macomb, in the advance, skirmishing with the enemy on shore. 8th. Proceeded to the White House. This day was occupied in cross the dragoons. 9th. The enemy approach and a skirmish ensues; one man killed. General Brown, with cavalry and some artillery, land to clear the bank. The flotilla and troops on shore stop one mile below Williamsburg. 10th. General Brown proceeds by land,—the fleet remaining with Boyd's, Covington's, and Swartwout's brigades, and some dragoons. The enemy increase in number and appear disposed to fight. During the greater part of the day, heavy cannonading ensued—attended with some killed and wounded on both sides. Several of our men were killed by the firing of the enemy's gunboats. Heard the firing between General Brown and the enemy. We lay on our arms all night, in the cold and

wet. 11th. About 10 O'clock, A.M. received information that General Brown had defeated the British, near the “Longue Saut”. The coast being clear, orders were given for the flotilla to proceed; and General Boyd to march by land.

BATTLE OF CHRYSLER'S FIELD OR  
WILLIAMSBURGH.<sup>44</sup>

In the neighborhood of Williamsburgh, and opposite where our flotilla was, the ground had been cleared except of a strip of woods a few hundred yards long, which extended nearly to the river St. Lawrence. West of this strip of woods there is an open plain extending beyond the town of Williamsburg, and intersected by ravines. A firing was heard between our rear pickets and the enemy. The firing was increasing, General Swartwout was directed to support the pickets on our right, near where the mentioned strip of woods joins the main woods, or forest. The enemy's whole force now appeared. General Covington's brigade was ordered to advance, and attack the British right. The brigade was immediately formed; the 9th Regiment, commanded by Major Aspinwall,<sup>45</sup> on the right; the 25th, under Colonel Gaines,<sup>46</sup> in the centre; and the 16th, commanded by Colonel Pearce, on the left. The brigade immediately dashed through the strip of woods, between which and a ravine the enemy were formed. At this time, a part of Colonel Cole's<sup>47</sup> brigade advanced to support Swartwout, and took post on the right of Covington's brigade. The action now become general. Covington's Brigade pressing on, the enemy fell back and took shelter in the ravine,—from which they were soon compelled to retire, by the well directed fire of the brigade. At this time General Covington, who was with the 16th Regiment, observed to Colonel Pearce that he was mortally wounded; and that command of the brigade devolved upon him.<sup>48</sup> At this juncture, Major Cumming, who had continued with the regiment some time after he was wounded, was obliged to retire; and nearly at the same instant Lieutenant Olmstead was killed. On ascending from the ravine, our troops were brought within pistol shot of the enemy, in the rear of the village of Williamsburgh, in which these took shelter and thence poured in a destructive fire on Covington's brigade,—which was very severe on the 16th Regiment, it occupying the extreme left of our army, near the village. Under all those obstacles, we drove the enemy half a mile,—giving them a number of deadly fires, until our ammunition was all expended. At this moment, consultation was held by the senior officers of the brigade, who deemed it proper to return to the ravine, and wait a supply of ammunition. This was done in good order. Four pieces of artillery had advanced beyond the ravine, in the rear of Covington's brigade. The enemy, seeing our troops retire, advanced in line. At this moment, Colonel Pearce ordered the artillery to fire, which it did in excellent style. The British broke and fell back, but were soon rallied and again advanced. A charge was now attempted by a body of our cavalry; but on receiving a fire or two, they retreated in disorder. The nature of the ground and service on the frontier had rendered successful operations of cavalry nearly impracticable.<sup>48</sup> The troops being furnished with a supply of ammunition, and ready to renew the conflict, were ordered by General Boyd, to take post on the east of the strip of woods, where they first formed. By this strange order, the enemy were enabled to capture one piece of artillery, whose gallant commander, Lieutenant Smith, had been mortally wounded.

After the battle, the cavalry proceeded down the shore, and the troops embarked without further molestation.

OFFICIAL LIST OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.<sup>49</sup>

*Covington's Brigade*

Gen. Covington, mortally wounded.  
Lieut. Olstead 16th Regiment, killed.  
Major Cumming, doing duty with the  
16th Regiment wounded.  
Capt. Foster, Wounded.  
Capt. Townsend, Do. (Prisoner)  
Capt. Murdock, Do.  
Lieut. Brown, Do.

*Swartwout's Brigade*

Major Noon, wounded.  
Lieut. W.S. Heaton, Do.  
Lieut. Lynch, Do.  
Lieut. Pelham, of the 21st wounded  
and prisoner.

*Cole's Brigade*

Colonel Preston, wounded. Captain Myers, wounded.  
Lieutenant Hunter, Killed. Captain Campbell, wounded.  
Lieut. Williams, wounded. Assistant and Adjutant-General  
Talbot Chambers, wounded.  
Total killed, 88 non-commissioned officers and privates.  
Wounded 221 Do Do Do  
Aggregate 309  
Of the 16th Regiment, there were  
Killed, 18 non-commissioned officers and privates.  
Wounded, 15 Do Do Do

It is apparent that the brunt of this action was borne by the brigades of Covington and Coles. The numbers engaged on our side were about 1500, on the part of the enemy, about 2000. The enemy's loss was reported to exceed 500. The firing ceased by common consent about 4 O'clock P.M. Our troops were formed in battalion in front of the enemy,—who were also in line. The two armies then separated; the enemy to their camp and we to our boats. Our troops being much exhausted, it was deemed most expedient that they should embark; and the dragoons, with the artillery, proceed by land. The embarkation took place without the smallest molestation from the enemy; and the flotilla made a harbor near the Saut, on the opposite shore.<sup>50</sup>

It is necessary here to make some remarks on certain passages in the *Memoirs* of General Ripley, heretofore mentioned,—and to expose their inaccuracy. We are informed in this memoir that “during the time that the 21st was thus engaged, a body under General Covington advanced and threatened the enemy's right on which he had planted his cannon. The 21st, acting on the enemy's left flank and part centre, and Covington's brigade advancing toward the right, caused the enemy for a while to fall back; but this appearance was soon reversed by the fall of General Covington, and with him the spirit and nerve of his brigade; it broke before the fire of the enemy's artillery, and in its dispersion sought shelter behind the ranks of the 21st, which though still engaged, remained unshaken. The 16th Regiment followed the unfortunate example of

Covington’s brigade.” The memoir is, doubtlessly, the production of some mercenary scribbler; and we assert that the statement in the above extract is a base and unmitigated falsehood. The “brigade” of three regiments—viz. the 9th, 25th and 16th “sought shelter behind the ranks of the 21st”! And the 16th, too, “followed the unfortunate example!!” General Boyd, in his official letter to the Secretary of War, says,—“The fight now became more stationary, until the brigade first engaged (Swartwout’s, in which was General Ripley), having expended their ammunition, were directed to retire to a more defensible position, to wait for a re-supply. This movement so disconnected the line as to render it expedient for the first brigade (commanded by Colonel Coles) likewise to retire.” According to the account of General Boyd, the commanding officer, General Swartwout’s brigade first retired for want of ammunition,—then Cole’s; and Covington’s—though not expressly to have retired—is known to have done so, last. General Ripley was with *Swartwout’s* brigade on the extreme right; Covington’s brigade was on the extreme left, near the town of Williamsburg; and Cole’s brigade *between* the two. By the above extract it appears that the 9th, 25th and 16th Regiments must have passed round the 5th, 13th and 12th Regiments (Cole’s brigade) in order to seek shelter behind the ranks of the 21st! Swartwout’s brigade was ordered, by General Boyd, to dislodge a body of British and Indians, on the enemy’s left, who had advanced into the woods, that skirted our rear. Why then was it that afterwards, Colonel Cole’s Brigade was “directed to attack the enemy left flank,”—which was “promptly and bravely executed amid a shower of musketry and shrapnel shells”? The list of killed and wounded will show in what manner “a body under General Covington advanced and threatened the enemies right, on which he had planted his cannon.” This brigade, not only sustained the fire of the enemy in front,—but of those who secreted themselves and fired on our flank from the village of Williamsburgh. General Boyd, in his official report to the Secretary of War, emphatically exposes the falsehood of the above extract from the memoir.<sup>51</sup> The report informs us that “General Covington; whose readiness to enter the field was an earnest of his subsequent activity, received a mortal wound while leading his men to a successful charge. His troops, still feeling the effects of his gallant example, continued to advance long after their brave commander had fallen,” XXX “After the fall of General Covington, Colonel Pearce, on whom the command of the Third brigade devolved, conducted with his characteristic coolness and valor.”

The following passages from the memoir afford a sample of the writer’s propensity to indulge in heroics: “The 21st twice charged the united 49th and Glengarry, when in both cases the latter, though superior in number, gave way, abandoning precipitately one fence to take post behind another, until their arrival on the main body.” Again, he speaks of “the Americans being everywhere, except the 21st *in confusion*”: and moreover, he says—“Negative as was the result of this action, and unfortunate the course of it, that character of the 21st was most honorably tested; it has twice charged and broken the enemy, *it had borne a fire so severe as to destroy nearly a quarter* of its number, but it had never been in the *slightest degree disordered*.” What sort of impenetrable stuff must this “21st” been made of? In all these furious onslaughts—tell it not in Oath! it had only one officer wounded (Lieutenant Pelham),—and he was taken

prisoner by the British. Such miserable bombast is simply ridiculous and fails utterly of its object. It is not intended, by these remarks, to derogate in any manner from the just deserts of the brave officers and soldiers of the 21st Regiment; but only to vindicate the fair fame of the officers and soldiers of the 16th Regiment from these base misrepresentations and baseless insinuations.<sup>52</sup>

On the 12th, the whole flotilla fell down the Longue Saut, to near Cornwall. This evening died the Gallant and truly lamented General Covington,—a man “without fear and without reproach.” He fell where he sought, at the head of his men. At this time, news arrived that General Hampton<sup>53</sup> refused to cooperate with General Wilkinson: in consequence of which, a council of war was held, and the expedition abandoned. The dragoons crossed the river.<sup>54</sup> On the 13th, we directed our course by way of St. Regis and Lake St. Francis to the French Mills, where we arrived the same night. French mills is a small town on Salmon River, Franklin County, New York. The campaign was now closed.<sup>55</sup>

There were two circumstances, either of which was sufficient to prevent a successful result of the expedition. It was undertaken two months too late in the season; and Generals Wilkinson and Hampton, who were appointed to conduct it, were jealous of, and diametrically opposed to each others measures. November 16. The remains of the patriotic General Covington were interred with military honors. The season being far advanced, we were ordered to make the utmost exertions to get under cover; and the Colonels were directed to superintend the erection of the huts for their respective regiments. The long list of applications for leave of absence now commenced. Generals and subalterns wished to be excused before a log was cut, or a hut erected. Every morning's order added to the list. In a few days after we arrived at this place, a detachment of a regiment was left without even a Captain to aid in preparing quarters for the men. The Colonel had been a few weeks on the frontier, and now obtained leave of absence “on urgent business,”—having an eye, it was surmised, to promotion; but he was disappointed, and soon resigned on account of the great exposure in the campaign. The sick list increased rapidly, for the reasons above indicated. The completion of the huts was so retarded that the troops were not able to occupy the principle portion of them until in December.<sup>56</sup>

On the 7th of December, 1813, Colonel Pearce received an order to repair to the city of Philadelphia, to take charge of recruiting service for the 16th Regiment. In the latter part of February, 1814, this cantonment was broken up and the troops marched to Plattsburg and Sackett's harbor. The 16th Regiment, with some other troops, proceed to Burlington, Vermont,—where they remained until the 25th of March,—when they joined the expedition against La Cole Mills.<sup>57</sup> On the 30th, they were—according to General Wilkinson—among “the select corps under Brigadier General Macomb, who were panting for the combat and, if there had been occasion for their services, would have displayed equal valor” with the advance of April 1. The army retired to Champlain Village, 9 miles from La Colle. On the 3rd, General Macomb was ordered to march with the 15th, 16th and 22nd Regiments, to Burlington,—where they arrived on the 4th. The remainder of the troops proceeded to Chazy and Plattsburgh. June 1. The troops crossed to Plattsburgh. On the 12th, Colonel Pearce arrived with the

recruits. On the 22nd of June, the 6th, 13th, 15th and 16th Regiments were ordered to march under Colonel Pearce to Chazy and report to General Smyth,<sup>58</sup> who was with his brigade at Champlain. On the 28th the gallant but eccentric Major Forsyth was killed in a skirmish with the British and Indian near Odeltown. He was the only person killed on our side. The enemy lost 17 killed, including some Indians.

On the 7th of July, Colonel Pearce was ordered to take position two miles in the rear of General Smyth. After remaining two weeks at this place, we proceeded to Cumberland Head, 2 miles east of Plattsburgh, to assist in constructing a battery to prevent the British fleet from entering Lake Champlain. In about a week the battery being completed, the brigade was marched to North's Fields, distance 20 miles, and within three miles of Champlain Village,—where General Macomb assumed the command. It being well understood that the British intended to attack Plattsburgh, and the fleet on the lake as soon as they had a force sufficient to justify the attempt, General Izard<sup>59</sup> had been making the necessary preparations to oppose them, when he received orders to march with the greater part of the force under his command, to support the army at Erie! Every individual, from the General to the Drummer, saw the absurdity of this order; but it must be obeyed. It was obvious that as soon as the British knew that we were beyond striking distance, they would attack Plattsburgh; and before we could march 400 miles, the army at Erie would either have been defeated, or would have beaten the enemy. On the 28th of August, Colonel Pearce received an order to proceed with the 13th, 15th and 16th Regiments, to Glenn's Falls. The day, we commenced the movement, and arrived at the head of Lake George on the 3rd of September,—distant 100 miles. At this place we received the mortifying intelligence, that a small British force had landed on the shore of the Chesapeake, marched 30 or 40 miles through a thickly settled country, the seat of the Government, and burnt the Capitol! We halted here, and the division was organized into two brigades, commanded by Generals Bissell<sup>60</sup> and Smyth. The 16th Regiment was included in General Bissell's brigade. On the 5th of September, the division proceeded by way of Glenn's Falls, Johnston, Remsen, etc., to Sackett's Harbor, distant about 175 miles,—when we arrived on the 15th. On the 19th, we embarked on Chauncey's fleet and landed at the mouth of the Genesee River, on the 22nd. On the 24th, we took up the line of march for Batavia,—where we arrived on the 26th. At this place Generals Izard and Brown held a Council; wherein it was agreed to attack Fort Niagara. Batavia is 38 miles from Buffalo; and instead of marching directly to the latter place; we made the following singular maneuver: *viz.* in the direction of the Genesee River by way of the Ridge Road, Lewistown, Falls of Niagra, &c. to Buffalo. This march occupied a week: and thus, instead of proceeding directly, 38 miles, we made a circuitous and very fatiguing march of almost 100 miles.<sup>61</sup> There was not a single boat below the falls of Niagara: But, by going direct, from Batavia to Buffalo, we could have crossed in two days, and avoided all that delay and fatigue. On the 10th of October, the army entered Canada; and on the 12th, being joined by Brown's division, we moved down the river, and arrived at the Chippewa Plains on the 15th. On the 16th, advanced to the Chippewa River, and found the British strongly posted on the opposite

bank,—the bridges and boats being all destroyed. A heavy cannonade commenced, which was warmly returned until night. On the 17th, the army fell back to Dead Creek.—

#### BATTLE OF LYON'S CREEK

The following is an extract from the report of General Bissell to Major General Izard.

“Camp, Frenchman’s Creek, Oct. 22, 1814”

Sir,

I have the honor to report, that in obedience to your orders of the 18th instant, I proceeded with about 900 men of my brigade, a company of Riflemen under Captain Irvine, and a small party of Dragoons under Lieutenant Anspaugh, by very bad roads, and creeks, the bridges over which were broken down, to Cook’s Mills, on Lyon’s Creek, a branch of the Chippewa<sup>6</sup> and encamped for the night near that place the enemy had stationed a militia piquet of 20 men, commanded by a Captain, who made their escape on our approach, the Captain excepted, who was taken prisoner. Their piquet of regulars found at this place was driven in and I threw across at that place (the only one at which it was practicable) the two elite companies under Captain Dorman, 5th, and Lieutenant Horrel, 16th Infantry, and the Riflemen under Captain Irvine; our advanced piquet on the Chippewa road. Commanded by Lieutenant Gassoway, was attacked in the night by two companies of the Glengarry Light Infantry, who were beaten off with the loss of one man only. On the morning of the 19th, we were attacked by the enemy in force, from the best information, amounting to more than 1200 men, composed of the 82nd and 87th Regiments of foot, detachments of the 100th, 104th, the Glengarry Light Infantry, a few dragoons and Rocketeers, and one piece of artillery, the whole commanded by the Marquis of Tweedale, Colonel of the 100th. The Light Corps under Capt. Dorman and Irvine’s Riflemen sustained the whole fire of the enemy for about fifteen minutes, with the greatest gallantry, until the other troops were formed and brought to their support. The 5th Regiment under Colonel Pinkney aided by Major Barker of the 45th attached to that regiment, was ordered to skirt the woods and turn the enemy’s right flank, and if possible cut off the piece of artillery. Major Barnard of the 14th was ordered at the same time to form to front, advance to support the light troops and charge the artillery; the 15th under Major Grindage and the 16th under Colonel Pearce were ordered to act as circumstances might require.<sup>762</sup>

The severe fire of the elite corps and the gallant charge of the 14th under Major Barnard—seconded by their brave associates was successful. The enemy retreated in confusion, leaving some killed, wounded and prisoners.

#### REPORT OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED

5th Regiment. *Killed*, 5 privates, *Wounded*, 1 Captain, 1 Subaltern, 2 Sergeants, 1 Corporal, 9 Privates: total 19. 14th Regiment: *Killed*, 1 Sergeant, 6 Privates, *Wounded*, 1 Subaltern 2 Corporals, 16 Privates, total, 26 15th Regiment: *Wounded*, 1 Private. 16th Regiment: *Wounded*, 1 Subaltern, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 6 Privates, 1 Prisoner, total, 10. Riflemen: *Wounded*, 1 Subaltern, 2 Corporals, 8 Privates:

Total, 11 Aggregate Killed, wounded and missing, 67.

NAMES OF OFFICERS WOUNDED

5th Regiment: Captain Bell, Ensign Whitehead

14th Regiment: Lieutenant Beckett

16th Regiment: Lieutenant Thomas

Riflemen: Lieutenant Ansbaugh

The loss of the British killed, wounded and prisoners, about 200.<sup>63</sup>

General Izard, hearing the troops comanded by General Bissell engaged with the enemy, forwarded a reinforement, which met us the next day on our return. On the 21st—the enemy not deeming it prudent to give battle—further operations were suspended and the army returned and encamped opposite Black Rock. General Brown’s division immediately crossed the Niagara River, and proceeded to Sackett’s Harbor. In the beginning of November—the works at Fort Erie being destroyed—the troops commenced building their barracks on the shore of Lake Erie, about one mile north of Buffalo. As Generals and Subalterns obtained leave of absence before a hut was constructed to protect the soldiers from the inclemency of the winter, in a short time scarcely a General or Field officer was to be found in camp. The mounted dragoons were quartered in the neighborhood of the Genesee River, they dismounted, at Batavia; the Light Artillery, at Williamsville; two companies of heavy artillery at Black Rock; the Rifle Corps in advance on [Conjockety] creek; the Infantry at the barracks between Buffalo and Black Rock.

About the middle of December—the barracks being finished—the troops were comfortably lodged in them. On the 25th of January, 1815, General Izard went to the city of Philadelphia; in command of the Niagara frontier devolved on Colonel *Pearce*. At this time, the lake was completely frozen over and no impediment remained to prevent the enemy from crossing with all their force and attacking us. Their force was very considerable, commanded by Major General [—], and within 12 hours march of Buffalo. By an order of the War Department, the Light Artillery, dismounted dragoons, and the 14th Infantry, were marched to Greenbush, and the 15th Infantry to Batavia. The 4th Regiment of Infantry proceeded to Williamsville to protect the stores, in place of the 14th Infantry, which was now at Greenbush. By this arrangement, the force at Buffalo was reduced to one brigade of Infantry, one battalion of artillery and one battalion of Riflemen; a force entirely insufficient to protect the post. Colonel Pearce, believing the situation of the army required the utmost vigilance, ordered a report to be made to him of the ammunition and ordance stores on hand; and was astonished to find that there was not a single musket ball cartridge nearer than Batavia,—excepting those in the soldier’s cartridge boxes; which would not have made five rounds to each man. A supply was immediately ordered; the pickets strengthened; and spies employed to give the necessary information of the anticipated attack. Owing to the caution of General Izard, in not accumulating a stock of provisions at this post, and the bad state of the roads, the contractor was unable to supply the army with meat. Some of the troops had been six or nine months without their pay, and a good deal of dissatisfaction began to show itself among them. The commanding officer ordered double rations of bread and whiskey, and assured the soldiers that the funds were daily

expected. These measures gave general satisfaction, and reconciled all difficulties.

On the 24th of February, the news of Peace was announced at Buffalo by a discharge of artillery; and the next British post by a flag. Friendly visits were now exchanged between the American and British officers. These informed us that they were making active preparations for the contemplated attack—which would have been made within two weeks, if peace had not been proclaimed.

Early in June, 1815, a General order was received from General Brown, announcing the re-organization of the army, and directed the 16th Regiment to proceed to Sackett's Harbor. Of this regiment there only retained in the Peace establishment one Captain, one First Lieutenant, and four Second Lieutenants. Without doubt, there were many officers kept in the service who had done honor to themselves and their country: but it was equally true that a number were selected for the Peace Establishment more through favoritism than merit. A Colonel, who acted so badly at the battle of Niagara that he was sent away, and his command placed under another officer, was retained in the army.<sup>64</sup> The disgraceful behavior of this officer afterwards compelled him to leave the service. Some of the gentlemen who acted a leading part in this *selection* have since felt the effects of it.

About to separate from those brave associates who had shared with him the hardships and dangers of the last three years,—Colonel Pearce caused to be prepared a handsome dinner for the officers of his regiment. Immediately after this entertainment—as a perpetual memorial of their kindness and regard—the following communication of reply were exchanged:—

COLONEL CROMWELL PEARCE,  
Commanding the 16th Regiment US Infantry.

Sir.

About to retire to our several pursuits in civil life, we cannot permit the present occasion to pass without expressing to you the high opinion we entertain of the attention which you have at all times, paid to the reputation of the Regiment, the feelings of your officers, and the wants of the men composing your command.

The 16th Regiment was early at the post of danger and has continued to the present time in the most arduous service. When menaced by the Enemy, you were ever found at its head, prepared to lead it to glory. When pestilence and disease raged in our camp, you left not the brave men, committed to your care, to languish and to perish; you deserted them not, to partake of the pleasures of the interior, or to indulge in the dissipation of Cities, but alleviated, as far as practicable, the condition of your sick and wounded. You, Sir, have not imitated the inglorious example of the butterflies of the day,—who at the first approach of winter fled their commands to bask in the sunshine of court influence: men who were regular in nothing, but their annual visits to the seat of the Government,—courting popularity, and soliciting preferment at the expense of real merit. Desirous that your military character should rest on its own proper basis, you disdained the petty—the miserable artifices, which, we are sorry to day, have proven too often successful. We rejoice that our country is so situated as no longer to need your services; yet we should be most grateful, did we not

regret a deparation from you,—with whom we have so long associated on the most happy terms of friendship. Though government has overlooked your merits, to make room for men who—although in the public service—have never passed the limits of their native state, in defense of their country,—who have written, not fought, themselves into notice; we beg leave to assure you that your many amiable qualities will be long remembered by those who had the honor and the pleasure to serve under your command; and that you will have, in your retirement, the good wishes of every man who prizes bravery and worth. That you may enjoy tranquility of mind, and uninterrupted happiness during the remainder of your life—a life rendered valuable by your eminent services—will ever be the wish of your obedient Servants.

Alexander McEwen, Captain, 16th Regiment U.S. Infantry.

Miles Greenwood,

Do Do Do

Nathaniel M'Laughlin

Do Do Do

Thomas Horrel Do Do Do

Thomas M. Powers, Lieutenant & Paymaster, Do.

Charles Fisher, Adjutant Do Do

Thomas P. M'Mahan, Quarter master,

Do

William Downey, Lieutenant

Do Do

Sylvester Roberts, Do Do

George Bryan Do Do Do

Hector Burns Do Do Do

Thomas Mahon Do Do Do

Lewis Defferback Do Do Do

Nathaniel Young Do Do Do

George R. Horter Do Do Do

Jesse M' Ilvaine Do Do Do

Benjamin Delavan, Surgeon's Mate

Do

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER M'EWEN AND THE OFFICERS  
OF THE 16 INFANTRY.

Gentlemen,

Your affectionate and very friendly address of yesterday was handed to me by your committee. That my conduct for the last three years—under so many trying and conflicting circumstances—should receive the unanimous approbation of those who have honorably and so faithfully participated with me in all the fatigues and privations of the camp, is truly gratifying; and a treasure which I value more than all the favors of court influences. As the scene will close in a few days which separates us, as military companions, forever,—I should do an injustice to my own feelings, were I not to embrace the present opportunity to express to you my grateful satisfaction or the cheerful and soldier-like manner with which you have seconded my efforts on every occasion. With you, companions, I rejoice that our beloved Country is restored to peace and tranquility and no longer requires our services in the field; and my only regret is

the separation from those who have so nobly devoted their service in their country's cause. I now, Gentlemen, with the sincere affections of a soldier, bid you a long farewell; and may all your actions—whether in the honorable situation of soldiers, or in the peaceful walks of private life,—be directed and governed by the Divine Disposer of all good,—is the sincere wish of your obedient servant,  
Cromwell Pearce  
Colonel, 16th Infantry.

Thus closed the career of the 16th Regiment; and its brave commander retired to private life in his native Chester with the proud consciousness of having faithfully performed his duty to his country. Colonel Pearce was far from wealthy when he entered the service; and when his regiment was disbanded, it could be truly said—in the words of Scotia's Bard,—  
He "left the lines, and tented field"—  
"A poor but honest Sodger."<sup>65</sup>

#### NOTES

1. See John C. Fredriksen. "Chronicle of valor: journal of a Pennsylvania officer in the War of 1812," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 67 (1984): 243–84, and John M. Crombie. "The Twenty Second Infantry—a forgotten regiment in a forgotten war," *Ibid* 60 (1967): 133–47.
2. The final regular unit recruited in Pennsylvania was the 5th U.S. Infantry, commanded by Colonel Daniel Bissell. A distinction must be made here between the regular regiments, who were clothed, armed and paid by the Federal government, and the various militia organizations, which were the charge of individual states. Further complicating this scheme was the existence of several battalions of United States Volunteers, which were closely analogous to the volunteer units of the Mexican, Civil and Spanish-American wars. The total failure of the militia system during the War of 1812 caused the government to raise its regular establishment to include no less than forty-eight regiments, the highest number the army was to possess until the First World War. But the militia system has continued to attract the most scholarship. Consult Robert L. Kerley. "The militia system and the states' militia in the War of 1812," *Indiana Magazine of History* 73 (1977): 104–24, and John K. Mahon. *History of the militia and the National Guard*.
3. "Biographical memoir of Colonel Cromwell Pearce." The original document is in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. This was the observation of William Darlington, a noted botanist from Chester county, who was a life-long friend of Pearce. Apparently it was he who made the final transcription of this document and incorporated Pearce's supporting evidence in the text, marked by an ampersand (&).
4. *Ibid*. See also J.S. Furthey and Gilbert Cape. *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, 1881, p. 666.
5. *Ibid*.
6. *Ibid*.
7. Henry Dearborn, 1751–1829. The most substantive biography is Richard A. Erney. *The public life of Henry Dearborn*. New York, 1979.
8. John Chandler, 1762–1841. See George F. Talbot. "General John Chandler of Monmouth, Maine," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society* 9 (1887): 167–205.

9. Joseph Bloomfield, 1753–1823. Bloomfield was the former governor of New Jersey and one of the few Federalists who supported the war.

10. Zebulon M. Pike, 1779–1813. Accounts of Pike are numerous with the most recent being John W. Terrill. *Zebulon Pike: the life and times of an adventurer*. New York, 1968. Also useful is W.E. Hollon. *The lost pathfinder: Zebulon M. Pike*. Norman, OK, 1943. A laudatory and antiquarian view is “Biographical memoir of General Pike,” *Analectic Magazine* 4 (1814): 380–95.

11. The St. Lawrence region was notorious for illicit trade with the British during both the Embargo and the war. See Harry F. Landon. “British sympathizers in St. Lawrence county during the War of 1812,” *New York History* 35 (1954): 131–138, and Francis W. Cunningham. *Zebulon Pike’s unfinished business: civil disobedience in St. Lawrence county, New York*. A typescript in the Oneida Historical Society, New York.

12. Isaac Chauncey, 1772–1840. See William Fowler. *Memorials of the Chauncey family*. Boston: 1858, 215–221, and Fletcher Pratt. *Preble’s Boys*. New York: Sloane, 1950, 170–199.

13. Benjamin Forsyth, 1760(?)–1814. A sketch appears in Samuel A. Ashe. *Biographical history of North Carolina*. 10 Vols. Greensboro, NC: 1906, V, 17–25, and Richard Patterson. “Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Forsyth,” *North County Notes*. No. 106, 1974.

14. This is new; tradition has it that Pike’s neck was crushed by a falling rock. See W.E. Hollon. “Zebulon Pike and the York campaign,” *New York History* 30 (1949): 259–275, and Robert F. Warner, ed. “The death of Zebulon Pike,” *Colorado Magazine* 32 (1955): 105–109.

&” Their Indian allies, seeing how things were going, scampered off at full speed—crying out to everyone they saw by way of excuse for their desertion—*Too much Yankee! Too much Yankee!*

15. Major Abraham Eustis of the Light Artillery left this version of Pearce’s conduct: “In five minutes we were again on the line of march, and passed over the ruins of the fort, by the stockade fort and barracks to the entrance of the village where, unfortunately, Colonel Pearce ordered a halt. A flag passed between him and Colonel Chewett of the York militia. Something like a capitulation was entered into. More than an hour was consumed in drawing up the articles; and in the meantime General Sheaffe, with his staff and about 100 regulars, made his escape.” *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 11 (1869–1871) pg. 494.

& “The unhappy surrender of General Hull, on the 16th of August, 1812, and the seeming inefficiency of the army during the residue of the season and the ensuing winter, had a depressing effect upon the national spirit that was only rendered tolerable by the reports of the brilliant exploits of our gallant navy,—which arrived in rapid succession shortly thereafter. Even the administration Newspapers had become quarrelous and moody: But when intelligence of the capture of the seat of government in Upper Canada reached us—mingled with repeated tidings of naval victories—one of the Philadelphia papers announced the gratifying event under the following apt quotation from the soliloquy of *Gloster*:-

“Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made Glorious summer by this sun of York;  
And all the clouds that lower’d upon our house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.”

& “While Colonel Pearce was in possession of Little York, information was brought to him that ten or twelve persons were imprisoned by the government because they had the independence enough to declare their opinions openly against the measures of their ruler. Colonel Pearce directed them to be liberated; and one of them was afterwards a Captain in our service.”

16. Despite all his attention to detail, it is surprising that Pearce omits any mention of the

burning of York or the plundering committed by the Americans. For denial of these acts see Dr. James Mann to General Henry Dearborn, June 6, 1815, and Eleazar W. Ripley to General Henry Dearborn, August 15, 1815, Lilly library, University of Indiana. Standard Canadian accounts are W.B. Kerr. "The occupation of York, 1813," *Canadian Historical review* 5 (1929): 9-21, and Edith G. Firth. *The town of York, 1793-1815*. Toronto: 1962. Among the Canadian party was John Strachan, the future Bishop of Toronto. See Alexander Bethune. *Memoirs of the Right reverend John Strachan, D.D., L.L. D., the first Bishop of Toronto*. Toronto: 1870.

17. Total American losses were 320; Pearce omits 14 naval casualties sustained by the fleet. Ernest A. Cruikshank. *Documentary history of the campaign on the Niagara*. 10 Vols. Welland, Ont.,: 1898-1907. Vol V, p. 183.

18. The English flag was hauled down by an English deserter employed by the American army, hence P. Finian's observation: "I saw the meteor flag of England bow by impious traitorous hands." Cruikshank, *Documentary history*, V, pg. 210.

19. Henry Dearborn to John Armstrong, April 28, 1813. Cruikshank, *Documentary History*, V, pg. 167.

20. Sir Roger Hale Shaeffe, the British commander, confirms Pearce's claim in his official report of the battle: "With these defective means the enemy was kept at bay for some time when, by some unfortunate accident, the magazine of the western battery blew up and killed and wounded a considerable number of men and crippled the battery." Shaeffe to Sir George Prevost, May 5, 1813. Cruikshank, *Documentary history*, V, pg. 188.

& "It is a curious circumstance that in the official accounts of the capture of York, the only mention of the Colonel of the 16th Regiment—on whom "the command of the troops had devolved for a time," and who "soon after took possession of the town,"—is in the report of Commodore Chauncey to the Navy department! And it is further remarkable that no one can find, in all General Dearborn's reports,—from the time he assumed command until he retired, by order of the President—any evidence or indication that there was or ever had been such a person as Colonel Pearce in the army."

21. Eleazar W. Ripley, 1782-1839. The item in question is "Biographical memoirs of Major General Ripley," *Portfolio* 15 (1815): 108-136. It has never been positively ascertained that Ripley was the author of this and it is unlikely as he was then embroiled in an embittered controversy over his conduct at Lundy's Lane. See Nicholas Baylies. *Eleazar Wheelock Ripley and the War of 1812*. Des Moines: 1890, and C.R. Corning. "General Eleazar Wheelock Ripley," *Granite Monthly* 17 (1894): 1-13.

22. Again, Pearce is correct. According to brigade orders issued April 25, 1813, "The second line will be composed of the 21st Infantry in six platoons, flanked by Colonel McClure's Volunteers, equally divided as light troops, the whole under the orders of Colonel Ripley." Cruikshank, *Documentary history*, V, pg. 162.

23. John P. Boyd, 1764-1830. For an amusing narration of his life consult Edward A. Powell. *Gentlemen Rovers*. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913, 1-19. A defense of his military career is in John P. Boyd. *Documents and facts relative to military operations in the late war*. n.p. 1816.

24. William H. Winder, 1775-1824. A record of his military career is in William H. Winder. *Statement of occurrences on the Niagara frontier in 1812*. Washington: 1829.

25. Winfield Scott, 1786-1866. For an account of Fort George see his *Memoirs of General Scott, written by himself*. 2 vols. New York: 1864. Charles W. Elliot. *Winfield Scott, the soldier and the man*. New York: 1937 is still considered the best biography.

26. This ordnance had been invented in 1784 by Lieutenant Henry Shrapnel of the Royal Artillery. It was not formally adopted by the British army until 1803, but saw active service in the battles of the Peninsula war. That the Americans, in 1813, were so surprised by its appearance demonstrates how far behind they lagged in the technical services.

However, one officer left us a humorous anecdote concerning shrapnel shells at the battle of Fort George: “Our attention was suddenly called to the front by the discharge of two or three cannon from the village, the effect of which was soon exhibited in sharp explosions just over the line, followed by showers of bullets, that pattered on our heads, as if a platoon had been firing from the sunny skies above us. It was a most unexpected point of assault, and one which none but a star gazer would have anticipated. Many, who would have not flinched at a ball, coming in the true horizontal fashion, buckled a little under these military pneumatics, which, menacing the cranium so directly, seemed to fall plump on the very citadel of life at once. An officer of rank, who was walking at the time in front of the line, where this inclination to duck and bob slightly showed itself, remarked with a hilarity that did credit to his presence of mind that “Soldiers should bow only to ladies.” This happy sally restored the line to its perpendicularity. . . .” “First campaign of an A.D.C.,” *Military and Naval Magazine of the United States* 2 (1834): 75.

27. Pearce’s source for this letter is unknown. The official losses were posted as 23 killed, 89 wounded. Cruikshank, *Documentary history*. V, pg. 247.

28. No record of this document can be found; Dearborn’s official report is dated May 27, 1813 and was widely circulated, so it is unlikely Pearce was unaware of it. Cruikshank, *Documentary History*, V, pg. 246.

& “Although the commanding general so carefully and entirely ignored the existance of the 16th regiment on all occasions, Brigadier General Boyd was not so quite particular. In the brigade orders of May 26, prior to the attack on Fort George, it is directed that “the troops will land in column and form immediately in order of battle: Colonel Miller of the 6th on the right, Major King of the 15th in the center, and Colonel Pearce of the 16th on the left.” The brigade orders of the day after battle, May 28, read thus: Colonel Miller of the 6th Regiment deserves great applause for the steadiness and rapidity with which he supported the advance party under the gallant Scott; the 15th under Major King, impatient to share in the honor of the day, immediately succeeded and formed under a most gallant fire; and the 16th, under Colonel Pearce, urged their boats to the shore and bore an honorable participation in the battle.” Both of these orders are in Cruikshank, *Documented History*, V, pgs 241 and 264.

29. This was the battle of Stoney creek. For two American accounts see John C. Fredriksen. “The memoirs of Captain Ephraim Shaler: A Connecticut Yankee in the War of 1812,” *New England Quarterly* 57 (1984): 411–20 and Elihu Shepard. *The autobiography of Elihu Shepard*. St. Louis: 1869, 55–56.

30. Morgan Lewis, 1754–1844. See Julia Delafield. *Biographies of Francis Lewis and Morgan Lewis*. 2 Vols. New York: 1877.

31. Morgan Lewis to John Armstrong, June 14, 1813. Cruikshank, *Documentary History*, V, p. 74.

32. The best American account of Beaver Dams is Isaac Roach. “Military journal of the War of 1812,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 18 (1893): 129–158.

33. David R. Williams, 1776–1830. See Harvey T. Cook. *The life and legacy of David Rogerson Williams*. New York: 1916.

34. Peter B. Porter, 1773–1844. Porter was one of the original “War Hawks” who quit his seat in Congress for a more active role in the war. See Joseph A. Grande. “The political career of Peter Buel Porter, 1797–1829.” Unpublished dissertation, Notre Dame university, 1971.

35. Cyrenius Chaplin was a noted partisan fighter of the Niagara region. See his *Chaplin’s review of Armstrong’s notices*. Black Rock, NY: 1836.

36. For a detailed sketch of army life around Fort George during this period consult *A sketch of the life of Lieut. Matthew Hughes, late of the United States Army*. Alexandria, VA: 1815.

37. James Wilkinson, 1751–1825. A defense against charges of incompetence is his *Memoirs of my own times*. 3 Vols. Phila.: 1816. One of his enemies, John Armstrong, wrote a scathing rebuttal in “Review of General Wilkinson’s memoirs,” *Literary and Scientific Repository & Critical Review* 1 (1820): 1–24.
38. Jacob Brown, 1775–1828. No satisfactory biography exists on this important military figure. See Winthrop H. Blackburn. “General Jacob Brown—Quaker Patriot,” *Panorama* (July, 1969) 4–23, and Elizabeth Wagner-Smith, “Jacob Jennings Brown, the fighting Quaker of Bucks county,” *Bucks County Historical Society Proceedings* 3 (1909): 416–428.
39. Leonard Covington, 1768–1813, from Maryland. The only biographical sketch of him remains Nellie W. Brandon and Benjamin L.C. Wailes. *Memoir of Leonard Covington*. Natchez, MS: 1928.
40. Robert Swartwout, 1778–1833, of New York. A collection of his correspondence is in the New York Public Library.
41. Alexander Macomb, 1787–1841. He was later the hero of Plattsburg. See George H. Richards. *Memoir of Alexander Macomb*. New York: 1833, and Milo M. Quaife. “Alexander Macomb,” *Burton Historical Collection leaflet*, 10 (1931): 1–16.
42. Moses Porter, 1755–1822, of Massachusetts. One source affectionately refers to Porter as “Blow Hard.” Mordecai Myers. *Reminiscences, 1780–1814, including incidents in the War of 1812*. Washington: 1900, pg. 21.
43. Drummer boy Jarvis Frary Hanks left the following anecdote about the encampment at Grenadier island, in his words, “to illustrate the character of the American soldiers and show how covetous men, like the dog and the shadow in the fable, in seeking to grasp too much may lose all.” “One farmer, near our encampment, had still in the ground a number of hundreds of bushels of potatoes. Soldiers are not generally very conscientious about appropriating to their own use almost anything that comes their way, especially eatables if they are hungry. With regard however to these potatoes, the owner was offered 50 cents a bushel for them if he would dispose of as many as were wanted for that purpose. In refusing this proposition he added with an air of triumph and self complacency that he “could get a dollar a bushel for them in Kingston.” It was soon noised around that an American farmer was intending to supply provisions to the enemies against whom we were contending, and before the next morning it was decided that he would be spared the trouble and expense of digging his potatoes and transporting them to market. The soldiers had relieved him of this burden, and when he applied to the officers to remunerate him for his losses, they gave him no encouragement or consolation in the premises, and he retired lamenting his unwise decision which had resulted so unfortunately for him.” From the Jarvis Frary Hanks papers, Buffalo Historical Society.
- &” Some of our junior readers may not clearly comprehend the allusion here,—though the phrase was well understood about that time. It refers to a circumstance mentioned by Commodore Decatur in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, while he was blockaded at New London. The Commodore intended one night, when the weather seemed favorable, to try and get to sea; but in the course of the evening, when it was believed the attempt was to be made, “two blue lights were burnt on the points at the harbor’s mouth, as signals to the enemy.” The Commodore adds,—“Notwithstanding these signals have been repeated, and have been seen by 20 persons at least in this squadron, there are men in New London who have the hardihood to affect to disbelieve it, and the effrontery to avow their disbelief.”
44. Although one of the larger conventional battles of the war, comparatively little has been written about Chrysler’s Farm in the scholarly sense. A general but questionable account is Ronald L. Way. “The day of Chrysler’s Farm,” *Canadian Geographic Journal* 62 (1961): 184–217. Two good first-hand accounts are John H. Bliss to John W. Weeks, Sept. 18, 1836, Weeks papers, Dartmouth College Library, and “Recollections of the

battle of Chrysler’s Farm by an eyewitness, Col. Sewel,” Kingsford papers, Archives of Ontario. See also Franklin B. Hough. *A history of the St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties*. Albany: 1853, and Myers, *Reminiscences, 1780–1814*, pgs. 41–43.

45. Thomas Aspinwall, 1786–1876. See Charles C. Smith. “Memoirs of Thomas Aspinwall,” *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 3 (1981): 30–38, and D. Hamilton Hurd. *History of Norfolk County, Massachusetts*. Phila.,: 1884.

46. Edmund P. Gaines, 1777–1849. The definitive biography is James W. Silver. *Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Frontier general*. Baton Rouge: 1949, and “Edmund P. Gaines,” *U.S. Democratic Review*, 22 (1848): 549–557.

47. Isaac A. Cole, 1780–1841. Cole was at one time Jefferson’s personal secretary. He assumed command of Boyd’s brigade when that officer replaced General Wilkinson, who was sick. For a sketch of his military career see his *Letters, &c*, published by Isaac Cole, *Colonel of the 12th regiment, U.S. Infantry, concerning his arraignment for trial before a military court in September, 1814*. Wash.,: n.p., 1814.

& “It is remarkable that twice in his first campaign, Colonel Pearce became an acting brigadier, on the field of battle. This fact—and the oblivious disposition constantly manifested at head quarters—often excited the indignant notice of his fellow citizens, at home,—in the style of the following regular toast, at one of the anniversary celebrations of the capture of York: “Colonel Cromwell Pearce—while brevets were lavished upon those who figured in the *drawing room campaigns*, the brave commander of the 16th Regiment was at his post and repeatedly performing the *duties* of a brigadier.”

48. For a general account of cavalry in the war see “Service of Captain Samuel D. Harris,” *Buffalo Historical Society Publications* 24 (1920): 327–342.

49. This is inconsistent with the official statement of losses given as 329. Cruikshank, *Documentary History*, VIII, pg. 179.

50. There is little dispute that Chrysler’s Farm was a reversal for the Americans, but while Pearce is non-committal about the final outcome of the battle, one junior officer was not: “Nov. 11th. Battle of Williamsburg in which our army was most shamefully beaten. To describe the battle correctly is impossible. There was no order or system displayed on our part. The enemy had about 2,500 men, our force only 1,000. Out troops fought well when not disheartened by conflicting orders. The 13th regiment had more than one fourth of its number in killed and wounded.” From “Journal of an Ensign in the War of 1812.” Oneida Historical Society, New York. See also David S. Townsend papers, New York Public Library.

51. John P. Boyd to James Wilkinson, Nov. 12, 1813. Cruikshank, *Documentary history*, VIII, pg. 170.

52. In a manuscript signed “Fiat Justitia,” Pearce continues his diatribe against Ripley’s account, insisting “You, Sir, are perfectly aware that the reputation of a soldier is or ought to be dearer to him than his life and that the slightest insinuation to his prejudice, if unjust, is altogether unwarrantable and unfeeling.” Pearce Collection, Mss 71. Chester County History Society. For similar indignation over Ripley’s alleged article see also “Remarks on the military memoir of Major General Ripley, published in the Portfolio,” Charles K. Gardner papers, New York State Library, and the Ripley collection, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

53. Wade Hampton, 1752–1835. The latest account of Hampton’s role in this fiasco is Allen S. Everest. *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley*. Syracuse: 1981.

54. These had to cross over at night, against a strong current and only with extreme difficulty. Shepard, *Autobiography of Elihu Shephard*, pg. 60.

55. On the whole, narratives of Wilkinson’s 1813 campaign are spotty at best and not infrequently colored by nationalistic preconceptions. see J.H. Leslie. “Chrysler’s Farm: November 11, 1813,” *Journal of the Royal Artillery* 63 (1936): 189–199, and Robert

Sellar. *The U.S. Campaign of 1813 to capture Montreal*. Huntington, Quebec: 1914. Much better, but still poorly documented is Charles W. Elliot. "The indispensable conquest," *Infantry Journal* 45 (1938): 334-342. A revealing, impartial, and altogether rarely cited source is Harrison Ellery, ed. *The memoirs of General Joseph Gardner Swift*. Worcester: 1890, 110-118.

56. The ordeal at French Mills came close to being a second Valley Forge. Colonel James Miller, the later hero of Lundy's Lane, left this vivid impression: "The army has been in a state of starvation ever since we landed here; the men have been deprived of all their small rations, such as soap, candles, whiskey, vinegar and straw, part of the time on half rations of meat and bread, and five days altogether without bread or flour; we could not even get flour for the nourishment of the sick in the hospitals, and when we got flour, one half of it damaged, the men were obliged to pound it up with axes and mauls before they could make it into any kind of bread. All this they have borne almost without a murmur, & constantly on hard fatigue. Our sick are destitute of almost every necessity and are daily increasing. I very much fear we shall have a distressed and destructive winter, but hope for better times." James Miller to wife, Dec. 8, 1813. Clements Library, university of Michigan.

57. See Ernest A. Cruikshank. "The combat at the mill on LaColle," *Canadian History Readings* 1 (1900): 322-330, and D.C. Gosling. "The battle of LaColle Mill," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 47 (1969): 169-174.

58. Thomas Adams Smith, 1781-1844. A biographical sketch is in N.B. Napton. *Past and present of Saline county, Missouri*. Chicago: 1910, 318-324.

59. George Izard, 1776-1828. For a defense of this controversial soldier see Gabriel Manigault. "The military career of General George Izard," *Magazine of American History* 21 (1881): 465-472, and "General Izard's military career, a reply to Mr. Henry Adams," *Magazine of American history* 26 (1891): 457-462.

60. Daniel Bissell, 1769-1833. See E.N. Jesop. *General Daniel Bissell, his ancestors and descendants*. New York: 1927, and Harold Ryan. "Daniel Bissell: his story," *Missouri Historical Society Review* 12 (1955): 32-44.

61. The only record of Izard's march and subsequent Niagara campaign is in the diary and letters of Jacob Porter Norton, Norton-Cranch-Adams papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

& "It is proper to remark here that the 15th Regiment did not cross with the 16th, but moved down the creek, and attacked the enemy's left flank on the opposite side. The 16th Regiment crossed Lyon's creek at the bridge and took up a position within 20 or 30 paces of the 14th Regiment. At one time, when the contest became very brisk, the 16th advanced, but the fire of the enemy slackening, it was directed to resume its former position. the official list of killed and wounded affords ample evidence on this point."

62. Daniel Bissell to George Izard, Oct 22, 1814. Cruikshank, *Documented History*, I, pg. 270.

63. British casualties in this short, sharp conflict were thirty-five; the Americans sixty-seven. There seems to be a long-standing ambiguity as to who won this, the last combat between regular forces in Canada during the war. One participant, Major Isaac D. Barnard, leaves no doubt as to the victors: "The enemy suffered considerably—we buried a number of their dead left on the field & took a few prisoners. The 14th under my command had its full share in this fight, I was ordered to charge the enemy in front—the enemy was driven in at all points. I am anxious to know what is said of my battalion which I think deserves as both officers and men behaved with great gallantry. I speak in this manner to you who know me so well that I am sure you will not suspect me of egotism." Isaac D. Barnard, Oct. 28, 1814. June Collection, Oberlin College Library. See also Barnard collection, Chester county Historical Society. His letters are in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. (condt)

63. (contd) For a British account of this battle see Lewis Einstein, “Recollections of the War of 1812 by George Hay, Eighth Marquis of Tweeddale,” *American Historical Review* 32 (1926): 69–78.

64. Pearce was referring to Robert Carter Nicholas, d. 1836, of Kentucky, who had commanded the First U.S. Infantry at Lundy’s Lane. Actually, Nicholas was acquitted by formal court-martial and was appointed Colonel of the newly constituted Eighth U.S. Infantry. Naturally, Pearce was indignant, but resigned, over these developments: “A list of the officers retained in service has made its appearance, if it has been drawn by lot it could not contain a selection less deserving. But what are we to expect where intrigue and favoritism is the road to preferment?” C. Pearce to I.D. Barnard, May 21, 1815, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

65. This last notation is William Darlington’s, who prepared the document in 1855 from “authentic documents and vivid recollections (of) one who enjoyed the privilege and pleasure of a personal intimacy with the subject for nearly half a century.” In 1816 Pearce became Sheriff of Chester county, a position he held for many years. He became a Presidential elector in 1824, and between 1825–1839 was an associate judge of the Chester County Court. He died on April 2, 1852. Additional fragments about Pearce can be found at the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.