

UPPER CANADA NEWS

Historic Military Establishment of Upper Canada
Royal Newfoundland Regiment, Bulger's Coy

April 2016



Registered Charity - Not-For-Profit Living History Organization

Chairman's Message

2015 was a slow year for re-enacting, probably due to a hangover from the 200th Anniversary Celebrations! For the most part the events have been smaller and more intimate as we expected. Nonetheless, we managed to have a great time. A number of new events came up as well. We seem to be more and more in demand locally to perform historic interpretations in support of our local historic locations.

This demand will continue due to our stellar performances in the past.

We have quite a few events to look forward to this year. As noted earlier we seem to be more and more in demand locally, which makes for nice events and minimizes travel for some of us. We were asked to participate for four evenings at Sainte Marie among the Huron's "First Light" event and the organizers were so impressed with our interpretation and work that they will be inviting us back for next year.

We started out 2016 with our traditional debut at Midland's Winterfest and as expected the Candy Cannon was a huge hit! It was a sunny day, but chilly, as the wind kept the crowds from coming down to the lake, however it did not dampen the spirits for those who did and candy was their reward!

We are celebrating our group's 25th Anniversary with a commemorative dinner at the Penetanguishene Curling Club. The event will be a "civvies" affair with a large contingent of friends, volunteers and members... past and present. This will be a delightful romp down memory lane as presentations and displays will highlight our groups' 25 years of accomplishments and excellent interpretation and programming.

We also have scheduled a group work party at the storage unit for May 7th to fix canvas, paint, repair poles and generally

spruce up the kit. Please keep this date in mind... the more the merrier! Our group owns all this equipment and tents, so feel free to use this equipment in your historic interpretations.

A few members attended a small event in Cape Vincent, NY last year. Our Sgt., Andrew Flint, was so impressed with the terrain and hospitality that we have decided to make it our groups' all-out event for this year. It also happens to fall on Friday, June 24th, which coincides with the 200th Anniversary of the disbanding of the Regiment, with group commemoration activities taking place.

Our group's garrison weekend will take place this year at Nancy Island Historic Site on July 9th and 10th. This event will be a great opportunity to drill, camp and bond as a group, as we perfect our historical skills and interpretations.

Another new initiative we have been asked to attend is the "Pirates of the Bays" event, taking place at Discovery Harbour on July 30th. Although not strictly a historic event, it will certainly be fun to wear your best swabby/sailor or pirate's outfit and fend off the British Navy as they try to claim our bounty! You will also have the chance to practice your best "Jack Sparrow" or "Anne Bonny" of the time.

Wasaga under Siege is now organized by the Friends of Nancy Island and was a smaller event this past year and went over very well. It was "invite only" and was meant to showcase our skills to the public. The event was a great success and we have been asked to return for 2016 and it looks to be a bit bigger and should be tons of fun.

We have been doing quite a few rentals and it has had its effect on our tents and equipment. At the same time, rentals have brought in significant funds to our group. Our group tents have been highlighted on the current TV series "Reign", as well as

documentaries and shows.

As a military man, I would never turn down a free meal and I'm looking forward to spending time learning more about period cooking and eating in camp. As events tone down there is more time for socializing and a bit more time for relaxing. All-in-all we can look forward to some great years ahead. As we move ahead we need to think a bit about who we are and what we do. Traditionally, at big events we have tended to go out as Glengarrys. However at these events we now have an RNR Officer, NCO's and a fair number of Privates. We should start thinking about events we all want to come out as the Royal Newfoundland Regiment - Bulgers Company. Doing line isn't so bad and it is certainly easier on the knees! We did a crack job at Fort George last year and look forward to seeing everyone out for Cape Vincent.

I believe as we move out of the spotlight of the 1812 Bicentennial, we can look forward to a richer, more relaxed and possibly more authentic re-enacting experience in the seasons to come. Most of the events we put on are funded by local municipalities, businesses, sponsors and community organizations. The many establishments in the Wasaga Beach area give generously to the Wasaga under Siege event as well. It is commendable to witness the professionalism and skill with which members of the group portray and interpret living history at all our events. Please keep up the good work in terms of portrayal and punctuality. It is that professionalism that keeps them wanting us back.

See you out on the field!

Eduard Kristufek - Chairman
Historic Military Establishment
of Upper Canada
Royal Newfoundland Regiment -
Bulgurs Company

Share Our Heritage... Bring History to Life!

When Right Added Might

With permission from author Tom Villemaire and Post Media

After the War of 1812, the Brits had two significant concerns about British North America. One was keeping enough people on the British side of the border, the other was ending slavery.

As in Britain, the abolitionist movement in British North America had gathered strength before the war. In 1793, John Graves Simcoe, as Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor, passed legislation that abolished slavery in what would become Ontario by 1810, making it the first place in the British kingdom to do so.

During the war, a black militia had served the British, and some black engineers had been involved in burning down Washington. After the war, the anti-slavery movement in Great Britain and British North America continued to be strong. It provided British North America with a strong moral upper hand while, at the same time, turning any runaway slaves in the States into at least potential allies to the British cause.

Lt. Gov. Peregrine Maitland offered black veterans land in Oro Township, near Penetanguishene Road. One of those veterans was Daniel Cokely, whose family, as a result, had a long history in the area.

Cokely was born in Vermont, a free state, around 1786. He emigrated in 1805 to what would become Ontario and settled in York, where he worked for the Boulton family. D'Arcy Boulton Sr. was the solicitor general of Upper Canada.

Cokely petitioned for land in 1807 - a pursuit supported by D'Arcy Boulton Jr. and Isaac Collumbes, a gunsmith in York. He was looking for prime land in Trafalgar Township (known today as Oakville). His petition, however, was

declined and the land went to someone else.

Cokely was recruited to help clear the recently surveyed Penetanguishene Road in 1808. Three years later, he made his way back to York and wed Elizabeth Austin on January 13. That March he was charged with aiding and advising two slaves accused of stealing property and trying to escape. We don't know the year of the alleged offence. Collumbes' testimony helped to clear him of charges.

Not long after, in July, Elizabeth Cokely had her neighbour charged for assault and forcibly entering a dwelling house. This seemed to be an ongoing feud between Elizabeth and her neighbour, Leah Flanagan. The court demanded each post a bond to keep the peace.

Elizabeth's four witnesses were tied to the Coloured Corps. Prior to the War of 1812,

African-Canadians, both freed slaves and those born free, were concerned about the increased possibility of invasion from the United States. Many offered to join an Upper Canada Militia and some did as early as 1793. At the start of the war, Richard Pierpont offered to raise a "corps of men of colour on the Niagara Frontier" - an independent company of African Canadians, or the Coloured Corps. At first, General Isaac Brock declined the offer, but he reconsidered when American General William Hull crossed the Detroit River on July 12, 1812.

Cokely is on the first muster roll of the Coloured Corps and probably saw action in the Battle of Queenston Heights. His name does not appear on later muster rolls, so it's unlikely he re-enlisted.

Cokely petitioned for a land grant in Oro Township in 1825.

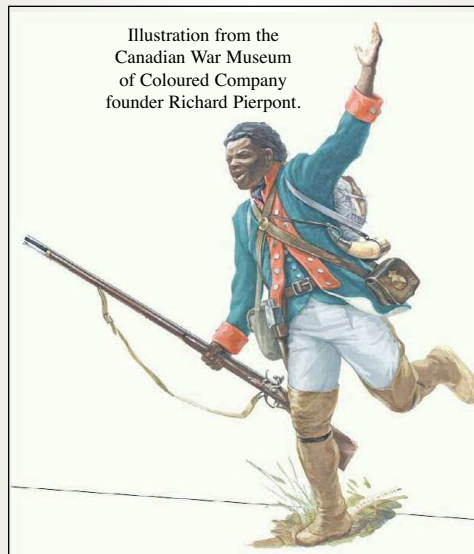


Illustration from the Canadian War Museum of Coloured Company founder Richard Pierpont.

He was given Lot 22, Concession 2. It seems Cokely and his family moved shortly after. In 1829, his seven children were baptized on Penetanguishene Road by Bishop John Strachan.

The lonesome nature of life in the woods would have been diminished somewhat over the next few years as friends from Markham and fellow veterans of the Coloured Corps came to join Daniel and Elizabeth in Oro - among them, Henry St. Dennis from Markham and John Call from Vaughan. They all got land off Wilberforce Street in Oro.

Many black residents of Oro worked for emigrant agent Wellesley Richey in 1832, clearing bush for the latest arrivals, allowing Cokely and his neighbours to earn some cash in the winter.

Elizabeth died in 1834. Cokely later married Mary Oliver, when he was about 48. John Call, Cokely's fellow Coloured Corps veteran, and his neighbour, Edward Walker, served as witnesses to the marriage. Edward O'Brien, justice of the peace, officiated. O'Brien's wife, Mary, writing in her diary, said, "the (wedding) party happened to come in just as the men had come in for dinner. The whole house was in a broad grin."

As Cokely's sons grew, he petitioned for more land and acquired Lot 14 Concession 2 and later purchased part of Lot 12 Concession 5 in Oro from another black settler, John Williams.

The black community in Oro grew. In 1836, Benjamin Johnson, Henry St. Dennis, Henry Montgomery and William Leonard, who were neighbours and friends of the Cokelys, successfully petitioned the government to get patents on their land, entitling them to full ownership.

When the rebellion began in Upper Canada at the end of 1837, two of Daniel's sons, Daniel Jr. and Nathaniel, joined Captain Alexander Laing's the Oro-Medonte Volunteers. They were joined by friends and

neighbours, including brothers Robertson and William Davenport, Benjamin Johnson, Henry St. Dennis, George Eddie and William Leonard.

In January 1838, Daniel and Nathaniel Cokely were among the volunteers from Simcoe and Grey counties enrolled in the Royal Foresters or the Simcoe Incorporated Militia. In contrast to their father's service in the Coloured Corps during the War of 1812, the younger Cokelys served in an integrated militia.

Daniel Cokely Jr. died March 16, 1838 in Toronto, while on militia duty. He was buried in the Garrison Cemetery. Of the remaining Cokely children, several married, some staying in Oro and others moving as far away as Syracuse, N.Y. Daniel Cokely married his third wife, Jane Williams, in 1844. As there is no record of either of them in the 1861 census, it is thought they had both died by then and were probably buried in the African Cemetery in Oro Township.



The Oro African Methodist Episcopal Church is pictured when it was undergoing restoration.

Orillia Packet & Times file photo



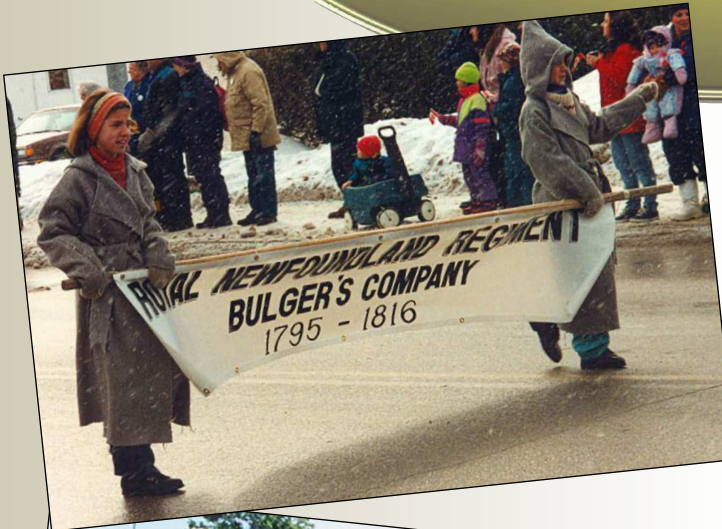
A six-member crew with the Archaeological Research Associates carefully search the soil inside the Oro African Methodist Episcopal Church - Oro-Medonte

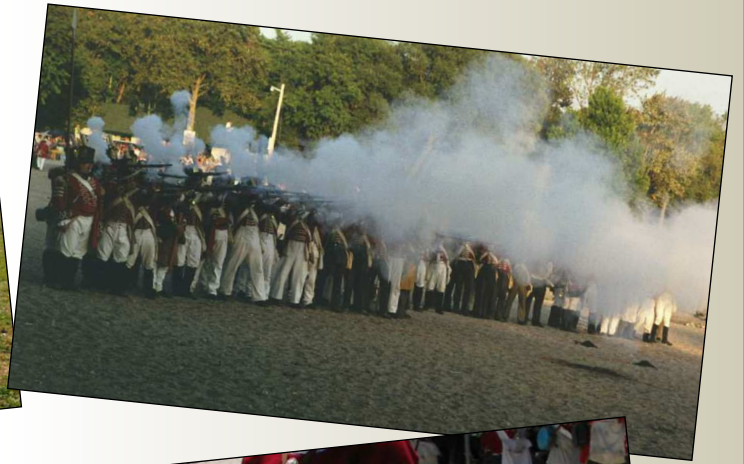
Mark Wanzel photo

25 Years

1991 - 2016

to be continued...

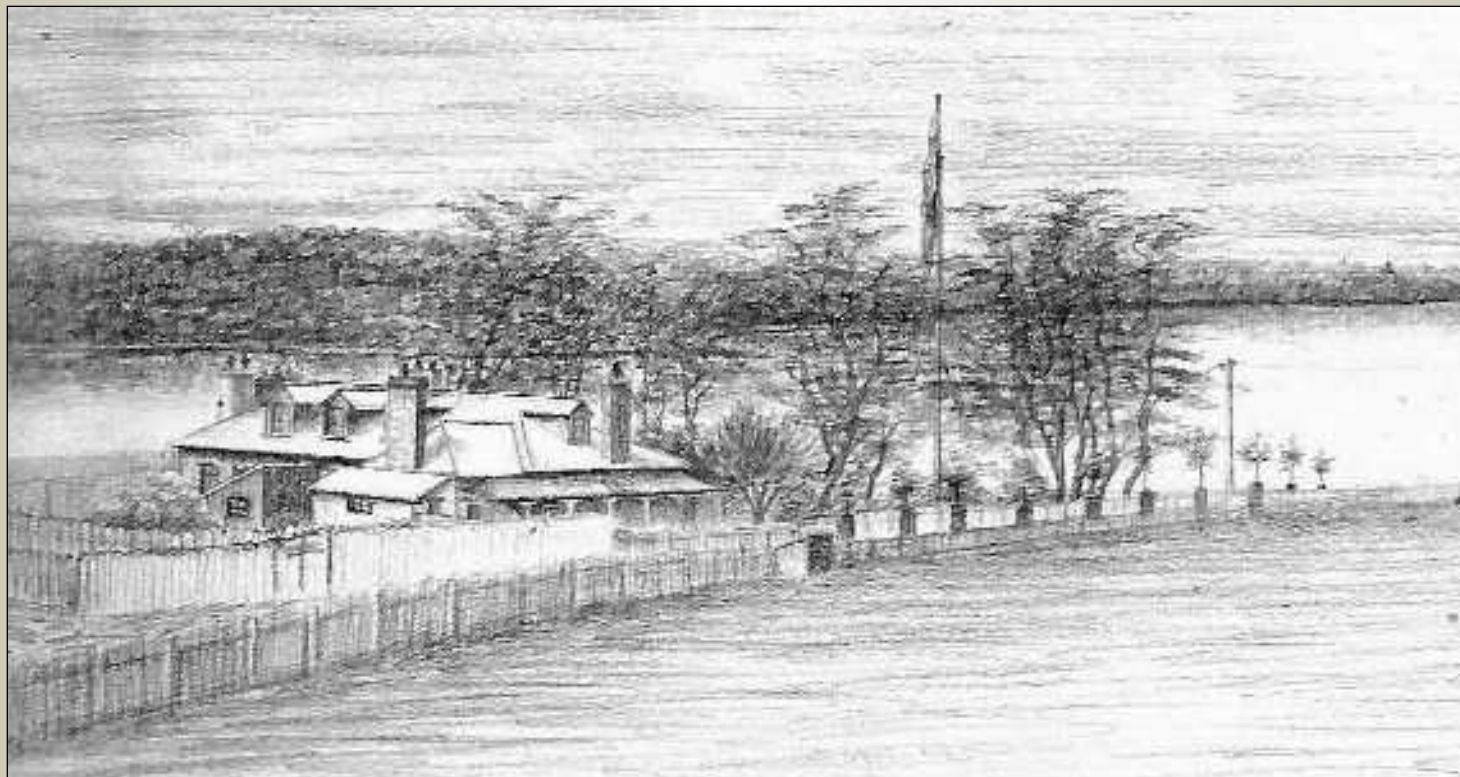






History of “The Experiment”

With permission from author Tom Villemaire and Post Media



This sketch of the Penetanguishene Naval Establishment's Officers' Quarters was done in May 1895, about 40 years after *The Experiment* was retired from service. It was done by J.W. Bald, better known for his photographs of Huronia. Bald took photos for the *Midland Free Press* at times. There are no known sketches or other images of *The Experiment* during its tenure in Penetanguishene.

Simcoe County's military history didn't end with the War of 1812. Penetanguishene continued to host the British naval base until the Royal Navy withdrew in 1834. The British army and Upper Canada militia continued to use the base into the 1850s, but it was the Royal Navy that held sway for decades.

One of the last vessels of the Royal Navy to see service out of Penetanguishene was *The Experiment*, a small side-wheeler steamer armed with up to three cannon and carronades (short versions of the cannon that could fire unusually large-calibre shot but over a much shorter range).

The Experiment was built in Niagara in 1835 by Captain Thomas Dick as a passenger and transport craft to run on the lower lakes. *The Experiment* was running regularly between Toronto and the beaches of Burlington during the summers of 1835 and 1836, but was taken into the service of the Royal Navy for the Upper Canada Rebellion in 1837 and retained in service afterwards. She ended her days serving out of Penetanguishene.

And *The Experiment* saw duty across the province.

Her most notable adventure was during the Battle of the Windmill in 1838. In 1837, rebellion had broken out in Upper and Lower Canada after decades of abuse of power by small cliques or family compacts which spent too much time looking after friends and family and not enough caring for the concerns of the rest of the residents - and taxpayers.

In Upper Canada the actual rebellion was fairly short-lived. Sir Francis Bond Head fled the province and reason returned fairly quickly.

But there were still pockets of unrest. This unrest was fed by

bands predominately of Irish background that formed mostly in the northern United States and officially called themselves Hunter Lodges.

1837 seemed to the Hunter Lodges a sure sign that Canada yearned to be free of the Crown, completely misreading the situation. So after a year sitting in their own echo-chamber, telling each other how right they were, they decided to invade Canada. And maybe they could not only free the hapless Canadians, but they could also leverage the British out of Ireland. None of this was that well thought out.

In 1838 the Hunter Lodges, or Fenians as they were also called, spring into action.

In November 1838, Prescott, down by the throat of Lake Ontario where it empties into the St. Lawrence River, was chosen as the place to start. It made sense, it was, as most throats are, the choke point. Communication between Upper Canada and Lower Canada and Great Britain needed to flow through this area.

The Hunter Lodge of Sackets Harbour came down the river to Ogdensburg in civilian boats including the ship *United States*, which the Hunters had installed cannon on, led by John Birge, one of the top brass of the New York State lodges. Early November 12, Birge and his 250 men tried to land at Prescott, but spies the British had planted gave advanced warning of the attack and the local militia, fortified with regulars, held off the first attempt. The Hunter Forces retreated and the two main ships ran aground on mud flats in the Oswegatchie River mouth where it flows into the St. Lawrence.

Here Nils von Schoultz, a Finn who had fought in the Swedish

army and the French Foreign Legion, took command of the Hunter Lodge forces. He regrouped his men in Ogdensburg and re-embarked once the vessels had been pulled off the mud flats.

The little fleet of terrorists or freedom fighters floated down past Prescott landing at Newport, about three kilometres away. The most noticeable feature in the area was a more than 20-metre-high-windmill with walls more than a metre thick of solid stone. The windmill was not an objective of the Hunter forces, but it soon became one.

On November 13, the militia under Colonels Plomer Young, Richard Fraser and Ogle Gowan along with a smattering of regulars from the British 83rd Regiment and backed by 600 militia, encircled the Hunter forces and attacked them. But the Hunters, led by von Schoultz, were no pushovers. The attack stalled with 13 regulars and militia dead and 70 wounded in exchange for 18 Hunters dead and who know how many were wounded.

The Hunters' position was not good. While they were protected in the windmill with its thick, high walls and tiny loop-hole-like windows, steamers on the side of the militia and British had arrived, including the little ship, *The Experiment*. Now reinforcements and supplies couldn't be brought across to support the Hunters.

According to a correspondent in the Christian Guardian in 1838, "the little British steamer *Experiment* with three guns was at Prescott and fought off the gun-boat United States (which the Hunter Lodges had seized) with two schooners in tow loaded with 800 or 900 men, and three times drove them back to Ogdensburg with much loss. The rebels succeed in landing about 300 men two miles below Prescott, which the Johnston Militia, aided by 40 regulars of the 83rd Regiment, drove into the Windmill, taking 29 prisoners and two cannon".

Gunners on *The Experiment* actually shot the head off the Fenian captain of the gun-boat United States with the small cannon.

So it's no wonder the rebels didn't feel all that great when more artillery was thrown into the mix. The big guns arrived from Kingston along with more regulars, more militia and even U.S. Army troops.

The final attack started with a bombardment of the windmill, November 16. *The Experiment* and other Royal Navy ships, too,

part with support from the U.S. Navy. The Hunters were surrounded and being hammered. They decided to surrender.

In all, 11 of the Hunters were executed. Sir John A. MacDonald, who would later become prime minister, defended the leader Nils von Schoultz, but in the end von Schoultz was executed as well. Australia was the destination for 60 of the captured rebels, 40



Old hewed log building that was situated on Magazine Island in front of Discovery Harbour and formerly used as the powder magazine.

were acquitted and 86 pardoned.

The Experiment was stationed in Penetanguishene as part of the militia naval service after the rebellion cooled off. It was seen patrolling the waters of Georgian Bay and even inland on some of the rivers. The 83rd Regiment was also stationed in Penetanguishene after serving at the Battle of the Windmill.

Midland's Samuel Frazer was reported in the Midland Free Press of seeing *The Experiment* making its way up the Wye River to Mud Lake before the bridge was built across it. Sometime in the late 1840s, *The Experiment* was anchored in Penetanguishene Bay behind Magazine Island where it eventually sank.

Share Our Heritage... Bring History to Life!

Board of Directors

Chairman	Ed Kristufek
Vice-Chairman	Andrew Flint
Treasurer	Tamara van Dyk
Secretary	Elizabeth Woodley-Hall
Business Administrator	David J. Brunelle

Membership Fees

\$40.00	Individual Membership
\$60.00	Family Membership

Note: Family membership includes only one individual that fires a musket. Any other immediate family members that fire a musket on a regular basis must purchase an individual membership for insurance coverage.

Group Equipment & Resources

Just a reminder that the H.M.E.U.C. has period historical equipment available to its members upon request and approval. These items include: period tents, flags, historic clothing, mugs, plates, fencing, candle holders, lanterns, furnishings, tables, chairs, accouterments and other historic period goods and wares.

For a complete listing of equipment available please contact the business administrator.

Events and Activities

If you have a community or special event you would like our group to attend, please let us know.

Mailing Address/Contact Information

23 Byrnes Crescent, Penetanguishene, Ontario L9M 1W4
Phone: 705-716-7124 • davidbrunelle@rogers.com

Newsletter

The Historic Military Establishment of Upper Canada publishes an annual newsletter to help keep our members and friends informed on what is going on within the group and the re-enactment world in general.

If you would like to contribute some editorial or photos, contact the business administrator for more information.