

Royal Newfoundland Regiment's Claim for the Battle Honours of DETROIT and MIAMI

by Robert Henderson

The following documentation will illustrate how the Royal Newfoundland Regiment is entitled to both the DETROIT and MIAMI British Battle Honours, which were created on April 16, 1816. It will be clearly shown that the current regiment was overlooked in the historic process due to the disbandment of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry in 1816. Further recommending the awarding of these Battle Honours to the regiment by the Chief of Defence Staff is aligned with the principles of the Canadian Forces Battle Honours and Distinctions Policy (CFP 200, Section 2). The approach of the bicentennial of the War of 1812 has reignited the public's desire to properly honour the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's distinguished service in that war and this conforms to the spirit of both historic and modern processes.

1. History of 1812 British Battle Honour Decisions

First it is important to show the evolution of British Battle Honours for the War of 1812 and how the DETROIT and MIAMI honours, which are applicable to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment,¹ came into being. The differences between the historic and modern processes will also be illustrated. The shortcomings of analyzing the current regiment's application purely by our fragmented understanding of historic process will become evident. The guiding principles of Canadian Forces Battle Honour Policy will be shown to offer the solution to filling the gap in our comprehension of historic policy.

Shortly before the end of the War of 1812, Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond recommended a distinction of honour to be awarded to the regiments that served under him during the capture of Fort Niagara on December 19, 1813 and the Battle of Lundy's Lane on July 25, 1814. In his request Drummond strongly encouraged his superior, Governor Sir George Prevost to ask that "Royal Permission may be granted to those Corps, to bear upon their Colours and Appointments the word NIAGARA as a testimony to their good conduct on the two occasions before recited."²

Because the war was still raging, Drummond appears to use the NIAGARA Battle Honour as a tool to motivate active troops in the field.³ By contrast, Canadian Forces traditionally award Battle Honours only after the conflict has been concluded. CF Policy more clearly defines the awarding of Battle Honours as providing "public recognition to

¹ While the official title of the regiment in the War of 1812 was the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry, the unit was often called in historic orders the "Royal Newfoundland Regiment", the "Newfoundland Regiment", and the "Royal Newfoundland Fencibles".

² Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), Record Group 8 I, vol. 686, p. 195, Drummond to Prevost, November 24, 1814.

³ A similar observation could be made for the CORUNA and ROLICA Battle Honours of 1812. London Gazette January 7, 1812 and March 10, 1812.

combatant units for active participation in battle against a formed and armed enemy.” (CFP 200.2.4)

Given the time it took for correspondence to travel to England in the early nineteenth century, Drummond's request was handled swiftly. On May 25, 1815 the Prince Regent on behalf of His Majesty King George III, who was ill, approved the NIAGARA distinction “in consequence of distinguished conduct.”⁴ Approval for such honours historically came from the head of state, while today that responsibility rests with the Chief of Defence Staff. This difference makes applying the historic process today awkward, because the head of state no longer has purview over the awarding of Battle Honours.

In 1815, a flurry of activity occurred where numerous distinctions were bestowed upon deserving British units for their service in the Napoleonic Wars. Waterloo had been won and there was an outpouring of public gratitude towards the British Army. However the military service of regiments during the War of 1812 were largely overlooked, particularly those that served under the command of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock.

Meanwhile, the Royal Newfoundland Fencible Regiment was ordered to be disbanded on December 25, 1815 and most War of 1812 Battle Honours, including DETROIT and MIAMI had yet to be sanctioned. The following month, on January 27, 1816 the Prince Regent approved for the 49th Regiment of Foot

... being permitted to bear on its colours and appointments ... the word QUEENSTOWN in commemoration of the very distinguished gallantry displayed by the flank companies of that Regiment, at Queenstown, in Upper Canada, on 13th October 1812, under the command of the late Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, who fell on that occasion.⁵

The QUEENSTOWN Battle Honour was significant for two reasons. Firstly it was awarded to the whole regiment for the actions of a detached sub-unit which matches Canadian Forces policy. Secondly it highlighted Brock's involvement in the Battle Honour.

England had identified Brock as a hero for saving Canada at a time when it was thought the province would quickly succumb to American arms. One Parliamentarian noted: “I am disposed to pay my tribute of admiration to our gallant troops in Canada, and my tribute of regret to their heroic leader...for individual heroism and self devotion,

⁴ London Gazette May 27, 1815.

⁵ London Gazette January 27, 1816. Brock was also Colonel of the 49th Foot. The regiment was also the title “Princess Charlotte of Wales' Regiment”. Princess Charlotte was the second in line to the throne after the Prince Regent therefore attaching her name to the regiment was in its self a significant honour.

under any circumstances, are glorious.”⁶ Public affection for Brock was fueled by both the events at Queenston and the Capture of Detroit.

However the regiment that distinguished itself the most under Brock during the first year of the war was the 41st Regiment of Foot. Overlooking this regiment when QUEENSTOWN was awarded caused the War Office to provide a solution tailored specifically to that regiment. On April 16, 1816 the London Gazette published the following:

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent has been pleased, in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, to approve of the 41st Regiment being permitted to bear on its colours and appointments....the words DETROIT, QUEENSTOWN and MIAMI in consideration of the distinguished gallantry displayed by that Regiment in the capture of Fort Detroit, on the 16th August 1812; in the defeat of the Americans at Queenstown, on the 13th October 1812; and in the action near the foot of the rapids of the Miami River, on the 5th May 1813.⁷

This memorandum not only created the Battle Honours DETROIT and MIAMI, but it rectified the omission of the regiment in the Queenstown honour.

This suggests great flexibility in the issuing of Battle Honours when the system was in its infancy two centuries ago. All were being awarded case by case. At times, it seemed whimsical, and/or exposed to influence peddling in the Royal Court. Case in point was the award of the NIAGARA Battle Honour to another regiment that was granted on July 8, 1816. The 82nd Regiment of Foot carried the title “The Prince of Wales Volunteers” in honour of the Prince Regent. On the noted date that corps was granted “the word NIAGARA in consideration of the distinguished services of that Regiment on the Niagara frontier during the year 1814.”⁸ In essence the NIAGARA Battle Honour was expanded to include the services of the 82nd Regiment at the siege of Fort Erie and the skirmish at Cook’s Mill, both in 1814, both of which were British defeats. Thus the Battle Honours was changed to include defeats.⁹

⁶ The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time. Vol. XXIV Comprising the Period Between the Meeting of the New Parliament on the 24th of November 1812 and the 9th March 1813. (London, 1813) p. 71.

⁷ London Gazette April 16, 1816.

⁸ London Gazette July 8, 1816.

⁹ A high casualty rate could not be used as a justification because the 82nd Foot suffered less than 25 fatalities.⁹ By comparison, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment⁹ experienced 65 deaths in the first six months of 1813, with 38 men killed in action between April 27 and May 29, 1813.⁹ The latter number represented combined casualties from the battles of York, Fort George, Sacket’s Harbor, and Miami Rapids. Troop returns dramatically illustrate the demands placed on the regiment in the first 18 months of the war with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment going from 483 effectives to only 210. Clearly the service of the regiment eclipsed that of the 82nd Regiment of Foot. War of 1812 Casualty Database; National Archives UK (NAB) War Office (WO) 25/2206 Casualties returns for the Royal Newfoundland Fencible Regiment.

When the award of the NIAGARA Battle Honour was expanded to include the 82nd Foot, the 6th Regiment of Foot which had also served in the same theatre also became eligible. On September 28, 1816, the 6th Foot was granted the honour NIAGARA, in an order matching the muted wording of the 82nd Foot memorandum of “distinguished service”.¹⁰ That same day, NIAGARA was also granted to one company of the Royal Artillery “in consideration of the gallantry and good conduct shewn by that company at the capture of Niagara, on the 19th of December 1813, and during the whole of the recent campaign on the Niagara Campaign.”¹¹ This was unusual because the Royal Artillery’s all-encompassing Battle Honour UBIQUE (meaning Everywhere) makes additional Battle Honours unnecessary.

The following observations can be made upon this review of the award of War of 1812 Battle Honours:

- a) Battle Honours are extended to Regiments either for actions the entire unit was present at or for the actions of detached sub-units, such as company-sized detachments. This is also consistent with present Canadian Forces custom.
- b) Regiments could lobby successfully for Battle Honours granted to other units and be awarded them from the head of state.
- c) Battle honours could be expanded to include additional military actions.
- d) The process was less systematic, displayed flexibility, and the head of state played a key role.
- e) The goal of Battle Honours was similar to Canadian Forces usage since they were used to motivate troops.
- f) The case of QUEENSTOWN shows Battle Honours historically could also be used to honour the role of a leader (Brock).

When the Battle Honours DETROIT and MIAMI were awarded, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was already under orders to disband and it was likely unaware that the Battle Honours had been created. If they were aware, there was little point in applying to the Prince Regent for the honours as they knew the unit would soon be gone. However as the Royal Newfoundland Regiment claims perpetuation to the provincial unit from the War of 1812 of a similar name,¹² it can now apply as there was no deadline for Battle Honour applications in the historic process¹³ and there is no cut-off date in the Canadian Forces Policy today (CFP200.3.2).

The lack of recognition of Canadian gallantry in the War of 1812 was obvious to one contemporary British commentator. He felt their bravery “which was brilliantly conspicuous on many occasions, has neither been sufficiently known, nor duly appreciated, on the other side of the Atlantic” and that the gallantry of the soldiers of Canada “has been kept in the back ground” by a “want of generosity which prevails

¹⁰ London Gazette October 1, 1816.

¹¹ London Gazette October 1, 1816.

¹² Department of National Defence Unit History: http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/37cbg_hq/units-unites/1nl-eng.asp

¹³ Battle Honours were awarded in 1909 for 1662-80 Defence of Tangier, 220 years after the fact.

among the [British] regular troops.”¹⁴ This suggests bias against Canadian units at the time of the awards.

Recreating the circumstances in which these decisions were made is impossible. There will always be gaps in records, and an inability to know what the head of state and his staff were thinking. Nonetheless, when it comes to the question of Battle Honours for modern CF units, Canadian Forces policy on Battle Honours therefore provides the necessary guidelines on this matter. Still the current regiment’s case will meet the requirements of both the historic process and modern policies. As both DETROIT and MIAMI were awarded together, requesting both honours simultaneously is consistent with the outcomes of the original process.

2. Meeting Historic and Modern Principles

2.1 Defining CFP’s ‘Cheapening Awards’ Principle

Before addressing the Royal Newfoundland Regiment’s case for DETROIT and MIAMI Battle Honours it is first necessary to discuss the policy principle of “cheapening awards by over-generous recommendations” (CFP 200.2.4 principle b). Often this principle is used as the primary reason for denying the awarding of new Battle Honours in the Canadian Forces. However the very existence of this principle opens policy to the personal opinions of staff, rather than establishing specific criteria to judge Battle Honour claims. When this policy is re-visited it is hoped a more thorough analysis can be made to determine whether the principle is valid, along with addressing the system’s lack of transparency.¹⁵ Since “cheapening” is hard to define, this principle can be used to explain away the refusal of any new Battle Honour in the Canadian Forces. The result is a capping in the number of Canadian Battle Honours, and the goal of providing “public recognition to combatant units” is forever diminished.

For this claim, this principle will be measured against other conflicts in Canada’s history where Battle Honours were awarded. It will be shown that 1812 honours do not diminish the value of other honours and that approving this request cannot be construed as “over-generous”.

In the Speech from the Throne on May 30, 2011 the Government of Canada outlined the significance of the conflict: “We will remember how those of diverse backgrounds and various regions came together to fight for Canada, ensuring the independent destiny of our country in North America.” No other conflict since 1815 has threatened Canada’s independence that the War of 1812. No Battle Honour in the

¹⁴ John Howison, Sketches of Upper Canada, Domestic, Local, and Characteristic... (Edinburgh, 1821) p. 78.

¹⁵ For example, the Australian army created transparency through their Army Battle Honours Committee which the Army’s History Unit sponsors and provides secretariat services to. Lack of transparency appears to be the central flaw of the present system.

Canadian Forces has been awarded for defending this nation¹⁶ from invasion by a foreign country's armed forces.¹⁷ On a per capita basis, more Canadians died fighting the War of 1812 than in any other conflict, including World War I and II. The World Wars aside, War of 1812 fatalities in real numbers eclipse all other conflicts involving Canada in for the past 200 years. Ironically during U.S. Senate Committee deliberations on "Star-Spangled Banner and War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission" legislation (HR 2052 and S 959), the conflict was identified as a defining moment in the creation of Canada.

While this point can be enhanced further by comparing the War of 1812 with other conflicts like the North-West Rebellion of 1885, this approach is undesirable. The merits of the War of 1812 do not need to be shown by challenging past Battle Honour decisions to publicly commemorate Canadian service in those events. It is clear from the above that the awarding of 1812 Battle Honours is in no way "over-generous" and that "public recognition" is wanted and required.

2.2 Battle Honour: DETROIT

The Capture of Detroit was the single greatest victory of British and Canadian forces during 1812 and gave the victorious commander Major-General Sir Isaac Brock instant fame.

This campaign ended with the capture of an entire American army and removed any threat of invasion on the Western frontier of Upper Canada (Ontario) for that year. American prisoners of war were parade through both Upper and Lower Canada (Quebec) which firmed the resolve of Canadians to defend their nation. The Government of Canada officially recognizes the Capture of Detroit as an event of national significance. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada's plaque reads:

In a daring move on 16 August General Brock embarked his troops at McKee's Point, crossed the river and forced the surrender of the Americans. This important victory raised the spirits of the Canadians and ensured the continuing support of their Indian allies.¹⁸

While the battle honour DETROIT is already recognized as militarily important, the fact the Government of Canada agrees underlines how its issuance to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment avoids "cheapening awards by over-generous recommendations" (CFP 200.2.4 principle b).

¹⁶ Nation is defined in this context as the founding peoples that eventually agreed to political union in 1867 creating the country of Canada. This definition is consistent with the 2011 Speech from the Throne, and the Canadian Forces already recognizes its beginning as **before** Confederation.

¹⁷ The Fenian Raids of 1870 were incursions by a foreign paramilitary group.

¹⁸ Located in Windsor, Ontario.

Additionally the forces committed to Detroit were significant. Approximately 40% in the British regular forces west of Kingston, Ontario were involved and militiamen were ordered to the theatre of operations from as far away as York (modern Toronto). This assists in placing the “relative size of the operational commitment” into perspective. (CFP 200.2.4 principle c).

It is necessary to point out the military status of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry in 1812. The regiment was a “provincial” or regular regiment on the British establishment that could serve anywhere in British North America. A company-strength detachment of the regiment under the command of Captain Robert Mockler (made local field rank of Major by Brock) was present at the Capture of Detroit.¹⁹ In addition another company played a supportive role in the campaign as Mockler notes himself as the senior officer of two. This is consistent with the presence of additional officers beyond the usual compliment per company.²⁰

Mockler noted the regiment “was employed in different skirmishes with the enemy” and how his detachment “resisted for ten days the attempts to force a pass of importance on the River Canard.”²¹ This event was significant in stalling American forces to allow Brock to arrive. Royal Newfoundland Lieutenant Andrew Bulger²² volunteered to join Brock’s relief force and states he “reached Amherstburg early in the month of August, and had the honour of sharing in all the operations which ended in the Capture of Detroit” and “was senior lieutenant employed at the reduction of that place and in every affair which occurred in that part of the country prior to that event.”²³

Two days prior to crossing the Detroit River on August 14, 1812, Brock divided his force of 300 regular infantry and 400 militia into three “Brigades”. The Royal Newfoundland Regiment’s equal service role with the 41st Foot is illustrated in the distribution. To ensure the steadiness of the two brigades made up mostly of militia, the detachment of Royal Newfoundland Regiment was assigned to one, and 50 men of the 41st Regiment of Foot were assigned to the other.²⁴ Brock estimated 50 Royal

¹⁹ The Detroit prize list is more specific on how many Royal Newfoundlanders were present: 4 Officers, 8 NCOs and 41 Privates.¹⁹ Further research may discover this number was larger, as those omitted typically applied later for their names to be added. These figures are consistent with the company strengths of the regiment at that time (average Royal Newfoundland company strengths in August 1812 was 48¹⁹). These strength figures show this claim meets both the historic and the modern participating strength requirements (CFP200,3,.2.16d and 17). Prize List. E.A. Cruikshank, Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812 (Ottawa, 1913) p. 148; LAC, Manuscript Group 13, War Office WO 17, Monthly Returns for Canada. August 1812.

²⁰ LAC, RG 8 I, vol. 721, p. 89 Memorial of Captain Robert Mockler, Quebec, July 21, 1815.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Born in Newfoundland in 1789, Bulger played an important role in the war. See: Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. VIII.

²³ LAC RG 8 I, vol. 721, p. 93 Memorial of Lieutenant Andrew Bulger, Michilimackinac, July 5, 1815.

²⁴ District General Order, Fort Amherstburg, August 14, 1812. in E.A. Cruikshank, Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812 (Ottawa, 1913) p. 142-143.

Newfoundlanders present with him when he crossed the river, or 17% of his regular infantry.²⁵ It should be pointed out that the 41st Foot also provided a detachment.

In the subsequent General Order announcing the Capture of Detroit, Brock had reported the following to his superior Sir George Prevost on the conduct of the regiment: "The detachment of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, under the command of Major Mockler, is deserving every praise for their steadiness in the field, as well as when embarked in the King's vessels."²⁶ Noting of the regiment's marine contributions in the capture is also noteworthy as the 41st Regiment of Foot did not serve in this capacity. Interestingly Captain Mockler later noted a "spirit of rivalry between the two corps - meaning the Newfoundland and the 41st".²⁷

Therefore given the regular status of the regiment, the arrangements for its employment at Detroit, the General Order announcing the victory, and the rivalry between the regiments clearly demonstrate this claim meets the principle of "recognized equally as comrade-in-arms". On August 16, 1816 - the date noted for the Battle Honour²⁸ - the Royal Newfoundland Regiment performed that same duties as the 41st Regiment of Foot to achieve the victory and therefore Brock's "praise" was well placed.

If the Chief of Defence Staff awards this honour, it is desirable that Major-General Sir Isaac Brock be mentioned in the promulgation statement, similar to the tribute given him in the QUEENSTOWN Battle Honour memorandum in 1816. In so doing, Brock's contribution to the defence of Canada²⁹ is recognized in the military traditions of the Canadian Forces. This however is neither central to this claim nor required in the granting of DETROIT to the regiment.

2.3 Battle Honour: MIAMI (Maumee Rapids)

The almost symbiotic relationship between the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the 41st Foot continued into 1813. During the hard fought engagement at Frenchtown on January 22, 1813 the regiment acted in the same capacity as the 41st Foot. The action was described as very "very brisk" with a bayonet charge by the

²⁵ Brock to Prevost, Detroit, August 17, 1812. in E.A. Cruikshank, Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812 (Ottawa, 1913) p. 158.

²⁶ General Order, Detroit, August 16, 1812. in E.A. Cruikshank, Documents Relating to the Invasion of Canada and the Surrender of Detroit, 1812 (Ottawa, 1913) p. 149.

²⁷ Proceedings of a Court Martial, Holden at Quebec, For the Trial of Lieutenant Benoit Bender of the 41st Regiment in July 1815. (Montreal: 1817) p. 44.

²⁸ London Gazette April 16, 1816. Modern process concurs: "a unit must have been committed in the locality and within the time limits described for the honour" - CFP200,3,.2.16b

²⁹ Just after Brock's death, one Canadian wrote: "General Brock who had been made a knight of Bath for his noble conduct at Detroit but unfortunately did not live to enjoy his honors. Never was a man more sincerely or more justly regarded. His superior genius and military science laid the foundation for that system of resistance and defence which has been...kept up by the handful of regulars and militia in Upper Canada." Part of that handful of regulars was the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. George Heriot to Edward Winslow, Quebec, April 13, 1813. University of New Brunswick Archives and Special Collections. Winslow Papers. Vol. 15-116.

Newfoundland detachment on enemy positions.³⁰ Frenchtown was a costly battle. The two regiments suffered a 31% casualty rate with the only regular officer fatality in the entire action being a Royal Newfoundlander.³¹

In the spring of 1813, U.S. General William Henry Harrison began to assemble his forces in the Ohio territory at Fort Meigs for an attack on Detroit and Amherstburg. The officer in charge of British forces in the region was British Brigadier-General Henry Procter (the 41st Foot's former lieutenant colonel). Instead of waiting to be attacked, Procter took the offensive. On April 23, 1813 the "Western Army"³² embarked with 482 regular infantry (413 of the 41st Foot, 64 Royal Newfoundlanders, and 5-10th Royal Veteran Battalion).³³ These numbers show size of the regiment's detached sub-unit meets both the historic and the modern participating-strength requirement for awarding a Battle Honour (CFP200.3.2.16d and 17).

On April 28, the Procter's force landed at mouth of the Maumee River, and began sieging Fort Meigs three days later. On May 5 an American relief force of 1,200 in cooperation with the Fort's garrison attacked British and Canadian battery positions around Fort Meigs. Procter's countered, retaking the lost batteries and effectively destroying the U.S. relief force. When the smoke had settled an estimated 400 Americans were died or wounded and over 600 were prisoners of war. By contrast, Procter's casualties were light: 15 killed and 46 wounded. While a detailed study is required of Royal Newfoundland Regiment records to determine its proportion of the casualties, there were at least 4 killed from the regiment.³⁴ This lopsided victory played a major role in the war by keeping American forces bogged down in Ohio, and redirecting enemy reinforcements away from the Niagara peninsula. The awarding of MIAMI to the 41st Foot in 1816 by the Prince Regent was justified.

Procter's dispatch reporting the victory shows the important role the Newfoundlanders played. Official battle dispatches and general orders played a key role in awarding Battle Honours historically. Three of the regiment's four officers present are specifically mentioned in the report. In conjunction with the men of the 41st Foot under Captain Peter Chambers, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment retook the southern battery seized by the fort sortie. Procter states:

Captain Chambers...I have to notice his Gallant Conduct in the Attack of the Enemy near the Batteries, at the Point of the Bayonet, a Service in

³⁰ See Proceedings of a Court Martial, Holden at Quebec, For the Trial of Lieutenant Benoit Bender of the 41st Regiment in July 1815. (Montreal: 1817)

³¹ Ensign Thomas Kerr was shot through the lungs and died 19 days later. Born in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia in 1789, Kerr was also at the Capture of Detroit. His father was James Kerr, a Loyalist Officer who settled in King's County, NS and was Colonel of the Militia there. His brother James joined the Royal Navy and was at the Battle of New Orleans, 1815.

³² Answers "relative size of the operational commitment" requirement. (CFP 200.2.4 principle c).

³³ LAC, RG 8 I, vol. 695A, p. 274. Embarkation Return of the Western Army. Amherstburg, April 23, 1813. This list states RNR present as 1 Captain, 2 Lieutenants, 3 Sergeants, 2 Drummers, and 55 Privates for a total of 63. However other documents indicate another Lieutenant present.

³⁴ NAB, WO 25/2206 Casualties returns for the Royal Newfoundland Fencible Regiment.

which he was well supported by Lieutenants Bullock 41st Regiment and [John] Le Breton of the Royal Newfoundland Regt.³⁵

He also notes “Captain Mockler, Royal Newfoundland Regt., who acted as my Aide-de-Camp, I am much indebted for the assistance afforded me.”³⁶ Like with the DETROIT case, the regiment took on more than just an infantry role in the battle. Procter acknowledged this by stating the Royal Artillery “were well assisted by the Royal Newfoundland Regt (under Lieutenant [James] Garden³⁷) as additional gunners.”³⁸

The Battle of Maumee was the only successful engagement in the arduous 1813 campaign in that theatre. Two unsuccessful sieges of Fort Meigs were followed by the failed assault of Fort Stephenson. When the two Royal Newfoundland companies finally returned to Amherstburg from the United States only “the residue of the detachment”³⁹ remained. In September, Newfoundlanders still answering roll call were ordered aboard the Lake Erie fleet to act as marines.⁴⁰ In the disastrous naval battle that followed, the regiment fought gallantly. Those who survived were taken prisoner and carted off to POW camps in Kentucky. Suffering there from deplorable prison conditions many Newfoundlanders succumbed to death. When the war ended only a handful returned home.

Considering the regiment’s service in that campaign, awarding the Battle Honour MIAMI to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment is both necessary and desirable. If the Chief of Defence Staff approves this request it is recommended that the spelling of the Battle Honour be corrected to MAUMEE.

3. 1812 Perpetuation

The Directorate of History and Heritage has previously contended that Battle Honours could only be awarded to regiments with an unbroken lineage to those events and sighted British tradition in this matter. In fact, the British have permitted regiments to assume Battle Honours despite lacking uninterrupted lineage.⁴¹

³⁵ LAC, RG 8 I, vol. 678, p. 261-270. Procter to Prevost, Sandwich, May 14, 1813; LAC RG 8 I, vol. 1219, p. 56-68. Procter’s Report, Sandwich, May 14, 1813.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ With James at the battle was his brothers Lieut. John Campbell Garden, and Volunteer Alexander Black Garden. All were born in New Brunswick. James dies in the Battle of Lake Erie. John is wounded and taken prisoner at the same engagement. Their contributions on Lake Erie are specifically recognized as nationally significant by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

³⁸ LAC, RG 8 I, vol. 678, p. 261-270. Procter to Prevost, Sandwich, May 14, 1813; LAC RG 8 I, vol. 1219, p. 56-68. Procter’s Report, Sandwich, May 14, 1813

³⁹ LAC, RG 8 I, vol. 721, p. 89 Memorial of Captain Robert Mockler, Quebec, July 21, 1815.

⁴⁰ The regiment’s service on Lake Erie is identified as nationally significant by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

⁴¹ There are a number of examples including 20th Hussars and the 96th Regiment of Foot who both received the PENINSULA Battle Honour through perpetuation in 1874. The London Gazette, May 8, 1874 and June 30, 1874. Courtesy of René Chartrand.

For example, in 1875 Queen Victoria approved “of the 100th (or Prince of Wales Royal Canadian) Regiment of Foot having inscribed on its Regimental Colour the word NIAGARA as formerly granted to the old 100th The Prince Regent’s County of Dublin Regiment.” Therefore a regiment raised one side of the Ocean was able to perpetuate a unit raised on the other. The 100th Foot was disbanded in 1819 and the second one was raised in 1858.⁴² In the case of the Royal Marines, the only Battle Honour emblazoned on their colours – GIBRALTAR – recognizes the distinguished services of units that the Royal Marines **do not** perpetuate.⁴³

The Royal Newfoundland Regiment also has Battle Honours without direct lineage. Formed in 1949, the modern regiment assumed the Battle Honours for the Royal Newfoundland Regiment from the First World War. This case is no different. Further perpetuation of the regiment to the War of 1812 supports this application for Battle Honours for its service in that memorable conflict. If British tradition is to be sighted, as the Directorate desires, perpetuation is preferred but not required to grant Battle Honours.

4. Why Battle Honours and Not Distinctions

Distinctions in lieu of Battle Honours have been proposed by the Directorate of History and Heritage as an alternative to acknowledge the regiment’s War of 1812 service. This would unfortunately create the perception that the regiment’s gallantry and sacrifice in the War of 1812 was less important than the regiment’s other Battle Honours. Grading honour within any regiment is inappropriate.

Historically the Battle Honours were placed on regimental standards (colours), badges, sashes, and other appointments. The Directorate proposes the same except 1812 honours would not be allowed on the colours. Time has not been kind to this approach. Take for example the history of the British War of 1812 Battle Honours. Initially the Battle Honours were inscribed on belt plates, cap badges, and other regimental appointments, along with being emblazoned on the unit’s colours. As the decades passed the inscriptions on appointments slowly disappeared. The result is the only place the words of NIAGARA, QUEENSTOWN, DETROIT, and MIAMI have survived is on regimental colours.

⁴² The London Gazette, April 5, 1875. Courtesy of René Chartrand. Further research may indeed show that permission to grant NIAGARA to the 100th (Prince of Wales’ Royal Canadian) Regiment of Foot was because of the importance Canadians placed on the War of 1812.

⁴³ The Battle Honour of GIBRALTAR was awarded by George IV (former Prince Regent) to the Royal Marines in 1827 to commemorate the four Marine regiments who serviced at Gibraltar in 1704. Gibraltar is the only battle honour on the colours of the Royal Marines. However the unit was created until 1755.

5. Conclusion

In 1909, after 220 years, King Edward VII publicly recognized the units that defended Tangier from 1662 to 1680 by awarding a Battle Honour. It is never too late to properly commemorate the noble deeds of a unit. One hundred years ago Captain Charles Boswell Norman wrote: “the regimental colours are the living symbol of ... esprit de corps. It is to their colours that men look as the emblems of their regimental history, and on those colours – or should be – emblazoned the names of all historic battles in which the regiment has been engaged.”⁴⁴ Those words ring true today.

The Battle Honours DETROIT and MIAMI emblazoned on the regiment’s colours would begin to publicly recognize the distinguished service of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the War of 1812. As this claim has clearly proven, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment is every bit as deserving of those Battle Honours as the unit that was originally granted them. The decision to award them to the regiment is overwhelmingly supported by both the historic process and Canadian Forces policies. Awarding these Battle Honours will enhance existing Canadian Battle Honours, not diminished them. In so doing regimental and national pride will bloom.

Former Military Curator of Parks Canada, Robert Henderson has been working in the field of heritage commemoration for over twenty-five years. His previous experience as an archival professional at the Library and Archives of Canada has given him the research skill-sets to properly document this submission. Along with creating and editing the most visited War of 1812 internet site (Warof1812.ca), Mr Henderson has authored dozens of articles on the said war for numerous publications. His book “Desperate Bravery: The Last Invasion of Quebec, 1814” will be published in 2012. For over a decade, Mr Henderson has managed a successful business providing heritage solutions to world-class institutions in over twenty different countries. The Smithsonian (Washington), Imperial War Museum (London), Musée de l’Armée (Paris), and Swedish Army Museum (Stockholm) are counted among his firm’s prestigious military heritage clients. He lives in Manotick, Ontario (near Ottawa) with his wife Renée and son Sébastien.

⁴⁴ C.B. Norman, Battle Honours of the British Army. (London, 1911) p. xxiv.