Fort Havoc (Wallace Hale)

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Winter March of the 104th Regiment

(Continued)

When the company to which Lieut. Charles Rainsford belonged arrived near the foot of Lake Temiscouata, a violent snow storm came on which with the intense, bitter cold, rendered it impossible for the troops to attempt to cross the lake, a distance of eighteen miles, without the danger of perishing and they were consequently unable to resume their journey for three days. Meanwhile the next company under Captain George Shore arrived at the lake. Supplies being exhausted, Lieut. Rainsford heroically resolved to cross the lake and proceed with all haste to Riviere du Loup for assistance. Two soldiers of the Light Infantry Company, Peter Patroit and Private Gay, volunteered to accompany him, both belonged on the Upper St. John. Their services were gladly accepted; each of them carried his knapsack, musket and ammunition. Leaving camp at daylight they journeyed half way across the lake when they met a man named William Long, who was employed by government to pilot people across the lake to the portage to the St. Lawrence. Long was on his way to ascertain the cause of the delay of the troops he had been expecting. He returned with them to his log house where Rainsford and his men made a hasty meal and then pushed on to Riviere du Loup. The snow continued to fall during the day and the air was bitterly cold. Upon their arrival at the depot on the St. Lawrence all was excitement and no time was lost in loading up toboggans with pork, biscuit, tea, sugar, etc., for the famished soldiers. Seventeen Canadians were engaged and off they started with the toboggans. Although they had already marched over fifty miles on one of the worst days of the winter, Charles Rainsford and his two men accompanied the relieving party back to Lake Temiscouata. They reached there at daybreak the following morning and were greeted with loud hurrahs and unbounded enthusiasm by the men of the two companies who had, in the meantime, succeeded in crossing the lake. Soon the famishing soldiers were partaking of good substantial food. This march of some ninety miles on snow shoes performed by Capt. Rainsford and his two companions in the course of a single day and night and under such cricumstances will always be regarded as a wonderful example of courage and endurance. Like many another brave man, Mr. Rainsford was wont to speak of his own exploits with difference [*diffidence?*], preferring rather to speak of the deeds of his comrades in arms.

In a description of this march to Quebec, published in 1872 in the British Standard, Colonel Playfair says, "We crossed on the ice and entered Quebec on the 27th February 1000 strong without losing a single man." The regiment did, however, lose *one* man and he is buried in the old church yard at Woodstock. This we learn from the parish register in which Rev. Mr. Dibblee has made the following entry: "March 17, 1813, Buried Lane, a soldier of the 104th Regiment who was taken sick on his way to Canada and died at Mr. Rogers."

The march of the 104th, however, considering the season of the year, the nature of the country traversed and the extraordinary severity of the weather, must take its place amongst the greatest marches in history, and it was practically accomplished without any loss. Benedict Arnold in his expedition against Quebec via the Kennebec river 1777 lost more than 300 men through cold and exposure. The distance from Fredericton to Quebec is about 350 miles and it was covered by the 104th in 13 days. In December 1837 the 43rd Light Infantry marched from Fredericton to Quebec in almost precisely the same period of time, and the Duke of Wellington speaking of their performance made the remark, "It is the only military achievement performed by a British officer that I really envy." How much greater feat was the march of the gallant hundred-and-fourth who poorly fed and clad passed over the same route on showshoes in the middle of a most inclement winter a quarter of a century before. Capt. Rainsford says the clothing of the 104th was poor and scanty, their snowshoes and moccasins miserably made, and even their mitts of poor thin yard.

Arrived at the seat of war the regiment was soon in action. It suffered severely at the battle of Sackett's Harbor where the following officers were among the wounded: Major Drummond, Capt. Richard Leonard, Capt. Geo. Shore, Lieut. Andrew Rainsford, Lieut. James DeLancey and Lieut. Moore. The names of many of the officers of the corps are well known in this

province as for example Lieut. W. B. Phair, Ensign J. A. McLauchlan, Surgeon Wm. Woodford M. D., etc. After the disbandment of the corps in February 1817, many of the men and a few of the officers took up lands upon the river between Presquisle and Tobique, where their descendants are found at the present day. The province of New Brunswick has no reason to feel ashamed of the record of the old "one hundred and fourth" either on the line of march or upon the field of battle.

When the war of 1812 broke out a part of the militia was called out for active service. One company was furnished by Woodstock and the surrounding settlements, the officers of which were Captain Richard Ketchum, Lieut. John Dibblee and Ensign Henry Morehouse. The company was stationed at the barracks in Fredericton.

In the month of February 1814 the route to Quebec via the St. John river was again utilized and excitement prevailed amongst the settlers as the troops in successive detachments passed up the river. The first to proceed on their way were 375 seamen destined for service on the Canadian Lakes. When they arrived at Fredericton the House of Assembly was in session and they promptly voted £100 to provide sleighs and sleds and other things for their accommodation and comfort. Hon. Edward Collier, their commander, returned his warmest thanks for "this liberal assistance." The sailors were followed by several companies of the 8th or Kings Regiment, commanded by Lieut. Col. P. P. Robertson. The House of Assembly immediately voted a further sum of £200 for the assistance and accommodation of the soldiers and sailors. For their patriotic action they received the thanks of Sir John C. Sherbrooke who promised to make the most favorable representation therof to his Majesty. Subsequently the House of Assembly voted another £100 to compensate Major Daniel Morehouse, Wm. McLauchlan and Capt. Peter Duperre of Madawaska for expenses incurred in accommodating the volunteer seamen and the men of the Kings Regiment on their march. The men who passed through to Canada in 1814 were favored with a better season, and better arrangements no doubt were made for them than for the hundred and fourth, nevertheless they suffered severely. Rev. F. Dibblee's services were again called into requisition and on the 6th February he buried in the old parish church yard, Matthew Abbey, master in the Royal Navy, who had died very suddenly at the house of Mr. Phillips.

At the close of the war a number of the men of the 8th regiment returned to New Brunswick where they were disbanded and lands alloted to them in the military settlements above Presquisle.

For the protection of the province a new Fencible Regiment was raised by General Coffin, it was disbanded in January 1816, and such of the men as desired to settle on the St. John river were alloted lands in the military settlements above Presquisle.

The House of Assembly in 1814 in conjunction with the council prepared and forwarded to the British government in England a petition praying that when a negotiation of peace should take place between Great Britain and the United States the International boundary might be so arranged that the important line of communication between the provinces of New Brunswick and Lower Canada via the St. John river might not be interrupted. The petition of the legislature was forwarded to the British government and along with it a suitable map prepared by the Surveyor General. There can be but little doubt that if England had at that time taken a firmer stand she might have easily secured the Aroostook region. During the war her troops had occupied Castine and Bangor and at the peace they were in possession of Moose Island (now Eastport) and the adjoining territory. The opportunity was allowed to pass and the province of New Brunswick is the poorer for it today.

W. O. Raymond

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