

The Brief Regimental History of the 49th Regiment of Foot

The 49th was one of the few British Regular Infantry units stationed in Upper Canada (*Ontario*), when the war was declared on June 23rd, 1812. By this time, the 49th had already been stationed in British North America for almost 10 years and was therefore quite acclimatized to fighting on the continent.

The regiment arrived in Montreal, in August of 1802, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Brock. It was then transported by bateaux up the St. Lawrence River to the military barracks at York (*Toronto*), where it arrived in July of 1803. The following year the regiment was moved to the military headquarters for Upper Canada at Fort George, which would remain the regiment's main base of operations for the next seven years.

In the months before the outbreak of war in June of 1812, the 49th had actually been ordered to return home to England. However, Governor General Sir George Prevost insisted that such an experienced regiment as the 49th must not be sent home when war was imminent. Consequently, Prevost suspended the regiment's orders to ship and the regiment remained in Canada for the duration of the conflict.

A record taken of the regiment's official strength in July of 1812, placed the strength of the 1st Battalion, 49th Regiment (*stationed at Fort George*) to be: 22 Officers, 41 Sergeants, 18 Drummers and 664 Rank and File, bringing its total 'paper' strength to 745.

On August 22nd 1812, six companies of the regiment were ordered to remain at Fort George, while the remaining four were to be sent to Kingston. The regiment's Grenadier Company under the command of Captain Dennis was then posted at Queenston, a small village seven miles below the Niagara Falls.



The Battle of Queenston Heights – October 13th, 1812

Later on October 13th, 1812 an American Army under the command of Stephen Van Rensselaer attempted to cross his forces and invade at Queenston Heights. The 49th Light Company under Captain Williams and Grenadier Company under Captain Dennis were already stationed at Queenston and were the first British Regular units to engage the Americans. Later in the battle, General Sir Isaac Brock had arrived from Fort George and rallied members of the 49th and other militia units to counter attack against an American force who had taken the British redan battery on the heights. It was during this counter attack that Brock was shot and killed. Later in the day, the 49th participated in Major General Roger Sheaffe's final attack against the American line on the Heights, which led to the ultimate British victory at the battle. The 49th was awarded the battle honour for Queenston Heights in 1816.

Later on November 28th, 1812, units of the 49th assisted in repulsing yet another American invasion attempt at Frenchman's Creek, near Fort Erie.

In May of 1813, a second American invasion successfully landed near Fort George and 5 companies of the 49th were left to defend the fort, while the remaining British troops were sent to repel the American landing. Eventually the 49th was forced to spike the guns and destroy the ammunition at Fort George and then joined the British forces under Brigadier General John Vincent in a retreat up the peninsula towards Burlington Heights (*Hamilton*). Later on the 6th of June, the 49th carried out a deadly night attack against the American camps at Stoney Creek. During the attack, the 49th charged the American artillery positions and this led to the capture of two American Brigadier Generals and the eventual American retreat back to Fort George.

A few weeks later on June 24th, 1813, a small force of 46 men from the 49th under the command of Lieutenant James Fitzgibbon was stationed at the Decou Farmhouse, near modern day Thorold, Ontario. The 49th, along with several hundred native warriors and the advanced warning of Laura Secord, was able to ambush an American force of 600 men and force their surrender at the Battle of Beaver Dams.



The Battle of Crysler's Farm – November 11th, 1813

In October of 1813, the regiment was moved to Kingston. After another American invasion force sailed down the St. Lawrence, aiming to attack Montreal, the 49th was part of a British force from Kingston sent in pursuit of the Americans. On November 11th, 1813, the 49th (*along with the 89th regiment*) formed the main British battle line that repulsed the American Army under Generals Wilkinson and Boyd at the Battle of Crysler's Farm. This was the only occasion in the war where the regiment was able to fully display their training and discipline in an 'open-field' engagement against an American force.

Later in December of 1813, the 49th was posted to Montreal to be refitted and receive new recruits. For the spring and summer of 1814, the 49th was primarily stationed at Montreal and Isle aux Noix. The regiment was later part of Sir George Prevost's massive invasion into New York, culminating in the Battle of Plattsburgh in September of 1814. Orders were issued to raise a 2nd Battalion of the 49th, given on June 2nd, 1813. The 2nd Battalion would be disbanded only a year later on October 24th, 1814.

After the war, the 49th was posted back to England, although it discharged 115 of its men to settle in Canada. Upon arriving in Portsmouth in July of 1815, the regiment was re-equipped and deployed to Weymouth on August 1st. In 1816, the regiment was renamed to the 49th Princess Charlotte of Wales's Hertfordshire Regiment. In the 1850's the 49th was combined with the 66th Regiment to become the Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Content from <http://49thgrenadiers.com>