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Introduction: Crossing Borders During the War of 1812

Susan E. Maguire

Introduction

The bicentennial of the War of 1812 focused a great deal of attention on the archaeology of the people and places impacted by the war. This volume presents research conducted in both Canada and the United States dealing with the archaeology of War of 1812. Some of these excavations were completed recently, inspired by the commemoration, while other articles review material excavated over the last 50 years. This collection of articles highlights the impact that the 200th anniversary of the war has had on bringing focus to the archaeology of this important time period for both Canadian and American history. This volume aims to add to our understanding of this important time period and also to document the methods that can be used to locate and investigate these important sites.

The volume begins with a retrospective written by Joe Last describing 50 years of research conducted by Parks Canada. While it might seem more obvious to end the volume with this review of the extensive work done by Parks Canada, we open the volume with this article to highlight the challenges and opportunities that the archaeology of the War of 1812 presents. We see these opportunities and challenges arise again and again throughout all the articles in the volume. This collection is organized primarily by geography with research from the Canadian sites presented first followed by investigations of a range of American sites. Given the focus on the War of 1812, many of the articles center on the excavation of military fortifications of all sizes and battlefields but, just as importantly, the impacts of the war are traced through research on domestic and underwater sites. Many of these articles focus on known sites and use more traditional archaeological techniques and methodologies to discuss the findings. A few combine new and old methodologies to locate the traces of fortifications or structures that have been lost to the historical record.

Joe Last starts off the volume with *What We Have Learned: A Retrospective on Parks Canada*

War of 1812 Military Sites Archaeology an important review of the archaeology of the War of 1812 conducted by Parks Canada over the past 50 years. Last has dedicated much of his career to documenting and interpreting the war at an amazing array of sites including Forts George, Malden, Mississauga, Henry, and Wellington. This research ranges from examining the evolution of British engineering and fortification design and construction during the war, to the alterations imposed by the invading American forces, to the everyday activities of the soldiers and civilians who occupied these sites. His assessment of the approaches used by Parks Canada and his insights into how we should approach the next 50 years are invaluable. Last carefully outlines the lessons learned in documenting and preserving these significant sites and the valuable information that has been gleaned from the research. Importantly, Last also reviews some important points for future archaeologists to consider as they develop research and preservation plans, making this analysis relevant to the long term preservation and investigation of any archaeological site.

Sue Bazely's discussion of the excavations at Kingston's Naval Dockyard remind us of the complexity of these War of 1812 sites. Her article, *Provincial Marine to Royal Navy: Archaeological Evidence of the War of 1812 at Kingston's Naval Dockyard*, reviews extensive excavations conducted at the dockyard between 1995 and 2010. The dockyard was established in the 1790s and was used heavily by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812. As Bazely highlights, the dockyard became a thriving village during the war with hundreds of people, both civilian and military, occupied in boat construction and at the hospital located on the site. Excavations at the dockyard located the remains of shanties, soldiers' barracks, officers' quarters, the naval hospital, the artillery barracks, the blockhouse, encampment fires, cess pits, chimney bases, pits, ditches, roads, and path. Her extensive research, both archival and archaeological, enabled the clarification of the history of the

extant architecture at the site as well as the reinterpretation of the history of the navy yard during the war. Bazely's work reminds us of the importance of examining the War of 1812 from a variety of site types, not only military fortifications. These other sites remind us of the impact the war had on the civilian population as well as the military groups.

Suzanne Plousos tackles a different challenge in her article on the *Redan Battery and the Battle of Queenston Heights*. Plousos reexamines material excavated by Elizabeth Snow of Parks Canada as part of an excavation to locate the north and east faces of the redan in advance of restoration efforts in 1975. Plousos' analysis of the material focuses on the role of the Redan Battery in the bloody Battle of Queenston Heights. During this brief battle on October 13, 1812, the British army, supported by Canadian militia forces, was able to repel American attempts to invade British North America. Additionally, the death of Major General Sir Isaac Brock during this battle made the battery a place to memorialize the fallen leader. The Redan Battery was constructed expressly for the defense of the border during the War of 1812 and was abandoned shortly after the war. Success at the Battle of Queenston Heights fostered a sense of national pride for Canadians. Plousos's reanalysis of the material culture from these excavations in relation to this single event focuses light on a short but truly significant event from the War of 1812.

Occupied by the Enemy: The Skirmishes at the Butler Farm during the War of 1812 by Eva MacDonald and Brian Narhi examines the impact of the War of 1812 on a domestic site. The Butler homestead was the home of Colonel John Butler and his family from 1784 to 1813. During the War of 1812, the farmstead became the site of an American picquet and three skirmishes were fought on the property during the summer and fall of 1813. By focusing on the spatial distribution of the military artifacts (including musket balls and shot, gun flints, armaments, and military buttons), MacDonald and Narhi are able to identify the probable site of the American picquet and to trace the likely movements of British and American forces at the site during this brief period of time.

Following MacDonald and Narhi's spatial analysis of the Butler Homestead, Anatolij

Venovcevs, Blake Williams, John Dunlop, and Daniel Kellogg apply Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis to the Fort York National Historic Site (AjGu-26) in Toronto, Ontario. In their article, *Geospatial Data on Parade: The Results and Implications of the GIS Analysis of Remote Sensing and Archaeological Excavation Data at Fort York's Central Parade Ground*, they consolidate data from historic maps, ground penetrating radar survey, LiDAR, and 30 years of archaeological investigation to reconstruct the early 19th century landscape at the fort. Using multiple lines of evidence from the fort, archaeologists were able to locate and investigate the remains of Government House, the first official residence of the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada.

In *The Many Faces of Fort George National Historic Site of Canada: Insights into a Historic Fort's Transformation*, Leskovec outlines the results of Parks Canada's excavations from 2009 to 2010 at Fort George, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. These investigations focused on the early landscape at Fort George and the construction techniques employed by the British Royal Engineers. Similar to many forts along the new border, Fort George was held by both the British and American militaries during the War of 1812 and these excavations also examined the alterations made during the American occupation of the Fort during the War of 1812.

Ben Ford takes us from the farms and fortifications of Ontario to the sunken remains of vessels used to control the Great Lakes in his article, *The Sunken Vessels of Chauncey and Yeo in Lake Ontario*. Ford reviews the British and American vessels from the War of 1812 that have been located and also discusses a few known shipwrecks that have yet to be relocated. Ford's review of the underwater archaeology of the Great Lakes warships provides insights into the construction and use of the ships and the events leading up to the sinking of these important vessels.

Tim Abel takes us across the border to the United States with his article, *Finding Cantonment Saranac: The Search for Col. Zebulon Pike's 1812-1813 Winter Cantonment in Plattsburgh, New York*. Abel outlines his discovery and survey of Cantonment Saranac, the winter quarters occupied by Zebulon Pike and members of the General Dearborn's 1st Brigade, including men

from the 6th, 15th, and 16th regiments, during the winter of 1812-1813. The site is noted in historic documents but the precise location of this ephemeral encampment had been lost. Phase 1 excavations identified a possible location for the cantonment in 1995, and, in 2011, a metal detector survey was conducted to locate and identify the location of the cantonment. Unlike other military sites with identifiable architecture, only a few of these War of 1812 cantonment sites have been identified. The metal detector survey followed by test excavations have identified the small structures known to have been built at the site, and buttons from the 6th and 15th Regiments of Infantry, among other diagnostic artifacts relating to the military encampment, support the identification of this site as Pike's Cantonment Saranac.

Similar to Abel's search for Cantonment Saranac, in *Protecting the Upper Chesapeake Bay: Fort Hollingsworth (1813-1815), Elk River, Cecil County, Maryland*, Jim Gibb William Stephens, Peter Quantock, Daniel Coates, and Ralph Eshelman collaborate to locate the traces of Fort Hollingsworth, a small breastwork built by the citizens of Cecil County, Maryland in 1813 to protect the Chesapeake Bay. Fort Hollingsworth was used only for the duration of the war and documents do not discuss the abandonment or demolition of the fort. Similar to Venovcevs et al. and Abel, Gibb et al. use multiple lines of evidence to locate this ephemeral earthwork. This project used noninvasive and minimally invasive techniques including magnetometer survey, microstratigraphic mapping, soil boring, ground penetrating radar survey, and focused archaeological investigation of identified anomalies in combination with oral history and prior archaeological investigations to identify the location and orientation of this unique fortification. This methodology is crucial to identifying archaeological resources with minimal excavation.

In *Variability in Militia and Regular Army Refuse Disposal Patterns at Fort Meigs: A Fortified War of 1812 Encampment on the Maumee River in Northern Ohio*, Nass revisits excavations at Fort Meigs to examine differences in refuse disposal among US military groups. The nascent US military was comprised of regular army soldiers, federal volunteers, state militia soldiers, as well as the officers for each of these groups. Members of these groups came from

different socioeconomic statuses and served in the military for different reasons and for different terms of service. These distinct social statuses can be linked to the types of material culture used and disposed of at the fort. Nass's investigations reveal that members of the state militias and federal volunteers likely carried more personal items and were less likely to conform to military standards regarding trash disposal. These findings relate to the documentary record which states that these units had a general disregard for authority.

The War of 1812 lasted a brief three years but had a tremendous impact on the histories of both the United States and Canada. The 200th year commemoration spotlighted this brief but bloody war on both sides of the border. This volume highlights the impact of the war on both military and civilian populations and outlines the approaches used in locating and interpreting these important sites. Of course the War of 1812 represents a particular and unique moment in history but these excavations also offer a great deal of insight into the investigation and preservation of military sites in general.

Now that the celebrations and commemorations have concluded we can review the lessons learned from this rush of attention. This research highlights two points for archaeologists to incorporate into their research models. These projects often required a great deal of collaboration among a variety of experts and with a number of stakeholders with varying motivations. Archaeology has long favored multidisciplinary approaches to the archaeological record and, as new technologies for data collection and artifact analysis become available, this interdisciplinary focus only becomes more crucial. Perhaps even more importantly we need to increase the collaboration among archaeologists working in different institutions and between the archaeological community and other community groups. These groups can be government agencies, be they federal, provincial, state, or municipal governments; universities; consulting firms; historical societies; friends' groups; or stakeholder groups. The strongest archaeology comes from these cooperative efforts, where the research involves members of interested constituencies and informs the history of different groups.

The public interest in the War of 1812 during the bicentennial provided additional incentives to explore this important time period but much of this research was underway prior to the anniversary and continues today. As archaeologists, we can seize these moments of increased public awareness to gain a wider audience for our research and, in some cases, there may be additional funds for interpretation and education during these anniversaries. It is crucial that we work to educate the community, particularly our elected officials, about the value of archaeology and heritage, more generally. As archaeologists we are keenly aware of the value of our research and the contribution that we make to our shared heritage, but we must share our expertise more clearly and more forcefully with the public. For it is only with the support of the community that we can maintain a healthy environment for heritage preservation and protection of archaeology sites for future generations. So this volume is not a goodbye to the archaeology of the War of 1812 but a call to use this momentum to continue educating the public about the contributions archaeology can make to the study of the War of 1812 and beyond.

Enjoy!

Susan E. Maguire, Editor