

J. Russell Harper's *Early History of Haldimand County* is frequently consulted by people researching Haldimand County history. The book is also available online at [www.ourroots.ca](http://www.ourroots.ca). Unfortunately, Harper makes a number of errors in his chapters on the War of 1812. Here are a list of some of them, with some related sources.

P. 23 - He's right that no *major* battle was fought in Haldimand during the War of 1812, but the skirmish at Nanticoke Creek was significant enough to warrant a national historic plaque in the community and another plaque on Parliament Hill, both of which were in place at the time Harper wrote the book. *The Civilian Soldier, A Complete History of the Norfolk Militia* by Bob Blakeley (Waterford: The Norfolk Mercantile, 2007) has a photo of the Ottawa plaque on page 17.)

P. 23 - War was declared on June 18, 1812 – not June 1, as Harper states. Some historians argue that the date was June 19, which was when the state of war was announced, but Donald R. Hickey states that the U.S. was officially at war as soon as President James Madison signed the war bill into law on June 18. See Hickey's *Don't Give Up the Ship: Myths of the War of 1812* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2006), page 41.

P. 23 - Natives were extremely divided on their view of the war; while many remained neutral, they were not "indifferent" as Harper claims, and some actually sided with Americans. See Carl Benn's *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1998.)

P. 24 - Joseph Willcocks represented the riding of West York, 1<sup>st</sup> Lincoln and Haldimand. Frederick H. Armstrong, *Handbook of Upper Canadian Chronology*, revised edition. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1985) pages 74, 102-103.

P. 24 - Robert Nichol was absolutely NOT a "Radical" at this point in time, and it's debatable whether he could ever have been described as such later in his political career. Politically, he opposed Willcocks and Markle during the early months of the war. "Robert Nichol" by Robert L. Fraser in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* online - [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca).

P. 24 - Willcocks was killed near Fort Erie, not Fort George. (Poet John B. Lee has written an interesting little book on Willcocks's life, which I'm publishing before Christmas.) "Joseph Willcocks" by Elwood H. Jones in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* online [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca).

P. 24 - Willcocks did go to the Six Nations as an emissary from Brock around August 1812, but Harper has missed some key points. I've yet to see any documentation that Willcocks actually convinced any natives to fight alongside the British and I've read quite a bit about him. John Norton, on the other hand, took about 100 warriors westward to join Brock near Detroit, although only about 50 of them actually got there, and this was *after* Brock visited the Six Nations on his way to Dover. "Joseph Willcocks" by Elwood H. Jones in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* online [www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca).

P. 24 - Brock's actual route is unclear, but he probably did not lead troops through Haldimand County on his way to Dover in August 1812. General E.A. Cruikshank, who wrote the multi-volume *Documentary History of the War of 1812* (basically a transcription of every document he could find) stated in the 1930s, at the unveiling of the Isaac Brock cairn in Dover, that Brock prorogued the legislature in York [Toronto], boarded a ship for the Head of the Lake [Hamilton area], stayed overnight there, then headed cross-country on horseback *with his officers* to visit the Six Nations on the Grand, near Brantford then headed to what is now Simcoe and on to Dover, probably along what used to be Highway 24. Brock was in a hurry as he had already given orders to assemble troops at Dover. Piecing together Cruikshank's information, we know he left York on August 5, reached the Six Nations on August 6, and arrived in Dover on the night of August 7. *Simcoe Reformer*, September 2?, 1930 and Bob Blakeley and Cheryl MacDonald, *Norfolk, Haldimand and the War of 1812, including the Six Nations* (Port Rowan and Nanticoke: The Norfolk Mercantile and Heronwood Enterprises, 2008), pages 23-25.

P. 24 - While Brock did enlist Tecumseh's aid when he got to the Detroit area, that was not his main objective. His main objective was to drive the Americans out of Canada.

P. 24 - Harper's comment that "... the balance of the white population west of the Grand River were more or less indifferent" is erroneous. There was a lot of indifference, but it was not confined to those west of the Grand River. Many men of the Norfolk Militia, including a number from Rainham and Walpole, served with distinction during the war. See Blakeley's *The Civilian Soldier*.

P. 25 - The Norfolk men who ousted the Americans at Nanticoke Creek were concerned about protecting more than Dover (and it was *Dover*, not Port Dover, at this time). Also, although most books say otherwise, the skirmish at Nanticoke was not, strictly speaking, a militia attack but a vigilante action, even though the men involved were likely all members of the militia. A letter from John Ten Broeck to Lieutenant Colonel Glegg, 11 November 1813 relays the resolutions passed at the meeting, including, "...it is not the intention of this meeting to interfere with any militia order that may be given..." E. A. Cruikshank, *Documentary History of Campaign Upon the Niagara Frontier in the Year 1813*, Part IV (Welland: 1907), page 157.

P. 25 - "Capt. Aiken" was actually Captain Charles Askin (1785-1869) of the Canborough and Haldimand militia. Askin was a son of prominent fur trader John Askin and a relative of Robert Nichol's wife Theresa. *Officers of the British Forces in Canada During the War of 1812-15* by L. Homfray Irving. (Canadian Military Institute: 1908).  
[http://www.archive.org/stream/officersbrit00irvirich/officersbrit00irvirich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/officersbrit00irvirich/officersbrit00irvirich_djvu.txt);

P. 25 - There is a typo in the quotation from Canby, which should begin, "The *tidings* of war soon arrived...."

P. 26 - The naval establishment at Port Maitland was not created until after the War of 1812. See John Docker's *Grand River Naval Depot* (Dunnville: Dunnville District Heritage Association, 2000), pages 2-9.

P. 26 - 11<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Militia should be 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincoln Militia. Either Harper or the typesetter misread the Roman numerals II.

P. 27 - Harper omits a significant fact about the Battle of Beaver Dams. It was a native victory, fought by warriors from the Six Nations, including John Brant and John Norton, as well as natives from Lower Canada. James FitzGibbon was initially given credit for the victory in contemporary newspapers, but freely admitted he had simply arrived in time to accept the American surrender. See Blakeley and MacDonald, *Norfolk Haldimand and the War of 1812, including the Six Nations*, page 43 and Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812*, page 117.