

Conversations with Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Nichol & Mrs. Nichol

being a review of the late war of 1812-14 and the political and social conditions of Upper Canada, as well as some discussion of the origins and history of the Norfolk Militia as contained in the celebrated new book The Civilian Soldier.

Imagine you could travel back to a time and place where you were content and comfortable to continue conversations with those you love. That's the premise behind Conversations with Colonel & Mrs. Nichol.



Scottish-born Robert Nichol was a sailor, soldier, businessman and politician with powerful connections from Montreal to Windsor. He was also a close personal friend and adviser of Isaac Brock, Major-General of British Canadian forces during the War of 1812. Theresa Wright Nichol was descended from French-Canadian fur traders and their Chippewa and Shawnee wives. Orphaned at four, she was raised by her maternal grandparents at "Castle Grant", an impressive mansion near Detroit where Shawnee warrior Tecumseh was a frequent visitor. Theresa's grandfather, Alexander Grant, was a Commodore on the Great Lakes, a member of the Executive Council and Administrator [acting Lieutenant-Governor] of the province from 1805 to 1806.

Between their wedding in December 1811 and the Colonel's mysterious death in May 1824, Robert and Theresa Nichol were frequently separated by duty and disaster, including Nichol's arrest in February 1812 and his duties as Quartermaster General of Militia for Upper Canada during the War of 1812. In May 1814 they lost their substantial home, mill and other businesses when American invaders attacked and burned Dover and the surrounding area. Compensation was inadequate and slow in coming, and for the next decade the couple struggled to regain their fortune and support their four children.

Meanwhile, Robert Nichol concentrated on his political career and emerged as leader of the opposition by 1816. Although his war service proved his loyalty unquestionable, Nichol's liberal views and outspoken criticism of the government made many enemies. When he was killed in a plunge over the Niagara Escarpment on the night of May 3, 1824, foul play was suspected. Virtually destitute, Theresa was assisted by highly placed friends, who helped pay for her son's education. She was also appointed caretaker of Brock's monument in 1831, a position that Laura Secord had badly wanted.

Authors, historians and re-enactors Bob Blakeley and Cheryl MacDonald offer a dramatic and compelling presentation. In authentic period dress, they evoke the life and times of one of the most prominent soldiers and politicians in Upper Canada, as well as a love story that transcends space and time.

45-60 minutes, with ample time for questions and discussion

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