

# War of 1812 Celebrations



## War of 1812 Celebrations Newsletter

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### What's Your "Notion"...

By Judi McWilliams

With the *War of 1812 Bicentennial* fast approaching, it appears that more and more articles are popping up. Many people are having interesting stories to tell. It seems to me that these articles are stating someone's "opinion". It occurred to me that it would be very interesting to "*ASK THE EXPERTS*" their "opinion". I researched the word "*NOTION*" and found that it suits this concept well.

Here is the definition of *NOTION*: "INSIGHT, COMPREHENSION, CONCEPT, ASSUMPTIONS, IMPRESSION, KNOWLEDGE (which you have a lot of), JUDGEMENT, OPINION, YOUR UNDERSTANDING".

Please see *What's Your "Notion"...* on page 2

### Wasaga Under Siege...

By Benjamin Fisher, Festival Nomad Correspondent

Dear readers - I am Benjamin Fisher. I am 12 years old and I am a War of 1812 British re-enactor from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. Re-enacting is probably the best hobby in the world.

I discovered re-enacting when I was 6 or 7 years old. My mother is a curator at the Ermatinger Cleurge National Historic Site and they have an 1812 event every September. When I was 6, I only knew about voyageurs and Coureur Du Bois who are men and women who would tell stories about the life of a voyageur. But when I heard about 1812 re-enacting I wanted to learn more about it. I started learning drills from Mr. Kevin Brooks an 1812 re-enactor from Barrie, Ontario for 2 years while he attended events at the Ermatinger Site in Sault Ste. Marie. After the 2 years my mother and I decided we would go on a 6 hour trip with 2 of her co-workers to Wasaga Under Siege.

This event was the thing that totally got me hooked on re-enacting.

Before we left to go to Wasaga, I wrote a letter to the coordinator of the event Mr. David Brunelle about seeing if I could borrow a British uniform and assisting in the reenactments. When I got the "yes" from him at the event I was so happy I almost bowed down to him right then and there. His reply to me was very formal and properly addressed with permission from the regiment, with the closing comment: "*God save the King*".

Please see *Wasaga Under Siege...* on page 2



Judi McWilliams  
Festival Nomad Correspondent  
War of 1812 Celebrations



"Re-enactment Soldier", Benn Fisher  
Festival Nomad Correspondent  
Sault Ste. Marie



*What's Your "Notion"...* from page 1

Now I am inviting you to give us your "**NOTION**". With your input, we will be placing some of these "**Notions**" on our website *War of 1812 Celebrations*. The questions to you for this newsletter are ... "**What is your "Notion" as to... "How the War of 1812 has impacted of lives today?"**", and "**Why is Living History important!**"

I hope to help create as much excitement as possible leading up to the *War of 1812 Bicentennial* and *beyond!* Your "**NOTION'S**" are most welcomed here! Reply to judi@ontariofestivalvisited.ca or 1-888-818-0255

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### Day 1...

The next morning (*opening day*) of the event I was mustered up and ready for the day. About 2 hours into the day I was told that I was going to become the cannon's *powder monkey*. The powder monkey was the most dangerous job in the War of 1812. If the powder monkey was shot then the cannon couldn't fire, if the cannon couldn't fire then there wouldn't be as many casualties on the battle field. For this I had to wear a new set of clothes that pertained to the position, and also had to learn how to load, clean and carry the powder for the cannon. I even had to wear ear plugs in order to protect my ears from the blast of the cannon and the black powder shot.

Later that day I met up with my friend and mentor, Mr. Kevin Brooks. Kevin said that he came to be our regiments sergeant during the battle that night, and he would be there for the afternoon the next day.

During the Cannon demonstration with my new leaders / friends Colin and Andrew they let me light the cannon a few times which I held as one of the events highlights for me. The men were very good at training me, and providing me the safety precautions, and seriousness of the maneuvers. Then Colin asked Dave Brunelle if I would be allowed to enter the battle line with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. Before the battle another member of the regiment, Dave Cobbern, more commonly known as "rooster", let me use his musket during the battle. I can't believe they trusted me to carry a gun. I felt truly honoured, and new that I had to be serious, and respect what these men were allowing me to do. I listened and followed their orders specifically.

Colin watched over me during the battle to make sure I knew all the drills and movements. But after the first musket volley I felt like I was actually in the war. There was so much smoke in my nose and fogging the air around me and even though I was not allowed to shoot because I was under age - I was there and "*immersed in the experience*". When the battle was over, the day was pretty much over too. However, I had one more experience to the weekend left that day....sleeping in the historical re-enactors wedge tents. My mother agreed to stay with me overnight. It was amazing to see, hear, and live life of 1812.

(To read more of Benn's article, go to <http://warof1812celebrationnotes.blogspot.com/>)



*The Fisher Family*  
**Wasaga Under Siege**  
Our Northern Festival Nomad Correspondents



*The Battle*  
**Wasaga Under Siege 2011**



*"Immersed in the Experience"*  
**Benjamin Fisher - Soldier Down!**  
**Wasaga Under Siege 2011**



*Drying Out*  
**Wasaga Under Siege 2011**



*Adrienne Horne*  
**Regional Project Manager**  
**Western Corridor War of 1812 Bicentennial**



*Adrienne with Interpreter*  
**Historic "Snakes and Ladders" Game**  
**Discovery Harbour**



*Adrienne with Interpreter*  
**Learning the Ropes**  
**Discovery Harbour**

## What's In A Name?

By Adrienne Horne, M.A., Regional Project Manager  
 Western Corridor War of 1812 Bicentennial Alliance

I have been working on this wonderful project to commemorate the War of 1812 for over a year now. It has taken me nearly 10,000 km across Southern Ontario; and as I drive I see all the names I am now reading and hearing about from 200 years ago.

It is amazing how many of the names for places in our communities come from the War of 1812; and does anyone notice or know the significance these people had on who we are as a nation and even what nation we live in for that matter?

Most historians will tell you that the War of 1812 forged this nation as the people came together as Canadians for the first time to defend their land and homes from an invading force. Most people are familiar with Brock, Simcoe, Tecumseh, and York, as these were the major people and places of significance for the war; but what about MacNab, Ingersoll, and Brant? These are also important people from that time and had influenced the outcome of the war in their own way.

Hamiltonians see the name MacNab on all sorts of things in their city, not to mention that his stately home, Dundurn Castle, was built upon a key site for the war, Burlington Heights. The heights have been an important location for people to meet, rest and get supplies for centuries. The British army also used the Heights, as they built a fort and mounds to stop the enemy from advancing to York. Do you know that at the age of 14, Sir Allan Napier MacNab, before his successful law and political career in Hamilton, fought at York and was part of the attack on Fort Niagara? Born in Niagara, his father was a Lieutenant under Lt. Col John Graves Simcoe (later becoming Lieutenant Governor for Upper Canada).

We all know who Laura Secord was, and love the chocolate! But are you aware that Laura was the daughter of United Empire Loyalist, Thomas Ingersoll and married fellow Loyalist, James Secord at her father's home, in what would become Ingersoll; the town south of Woodstock, settled by Tom Ingersoll. Governor Simcoe had awarded Ingersoll a land grant for his loyal service during the American Revolution.

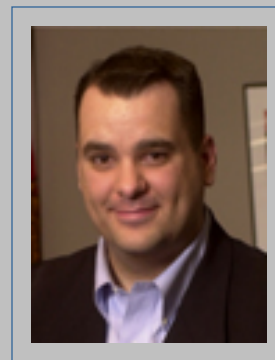
(To read the entire article go to  
<http://warof1812celebrationnotes.blogspot.com/>)



**Honourable Minister Michael Chan MPP**  
Minister of Tourism and Culture, Province of Ontario  
with **Judi and Gary McWilliams**



*Honourable Minister Michael Chan*  
with **Gary McWilliams and Mukunthan**  
**Paramalingham**



*Minister of Canadian Heritage*  
**The Honourable James Moore, PC MP**

## *Investing In Our Future...*

By Judi McWilliams

The *Ontario Provincial* and *Federal Governments* are in the process of providing generous funding for the efforts to promote the upcoming *War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebrations*.

*The Provincial Government* posted this article in February 2009. "Ministry of Tourism - Province Develops Plans for War of 1812 Bicentennial *McGuinty Government Helps Communities Plan For Bicentennial Opportunity TORONTO, Feb. 14 - The Bicentennial of the War of 1812 is a huge opportunity for Ontario's tourism industry, said Tourism Minister Peter Fonseca at the War of 1812 Bicentennial Provincial Symposium in Toronto today. Fonseca announced that the province will provide the regions of Niagara, Toronto, Windsor/Chatham, 1000 Islands, Georgian Bay and Sault Ste. Marie with \$8,000 each to help develop plans to commemorate the War of 1812*".

*"The Bicentennial is a terrific opportunity for Ontarians to remember the contributions that were made the undefended border. Furthermore, the celebrations will stimulate downtown and the waterfront revitalization projects and otherwise strengthen residents' pride in their communities," said Fonseca. "This is a tremendous opportunity for Ontarians to share their history and celebrate their historic local heroes. Municipal governments, museums, history societies, historical re-enactment associations and others must work together so that Ontarians may all share in the Bicentennial benefits. The key to success is close collaboration," said Brownell. Tourism contributes over \$20 billion annually to Ontario's economy and accounts for more than 300,000 direct and indirect jobs. Ontario's cultural tourism generates more than \$4.6 billion annually across the province and is the tourist industry's fastest-growing segment"*.

Time has progressed and we are moving into action. Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing the *Honourable Minister Chan, Minister of Tourism and Culture*. He seems very excited about the upcoming War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebrations. "Michael Chan is a first generation immigrant himself. He feels the War of 1812 gave Canada an identity and that it is important to remember the War and the heroes of that time! Minister Chan was emphatic again as he stressed the importance of engaging New Canadians, as it will enhance the integration of these people into Canadian life and society. He said he would like these celebrations to be highly promoted to help "pull the new immigrants from their own box into Ontario". It will be an opportunity to enhance integration, Mr. Chan states. He considers himself a "pioneer voyager". He reminds us that in 25 years from now, these New Canadians will not be new. They will be integrated and form our Canadian communities. These folks will continue to immigrate and become the supply of the new people. Michael Chan said he appreciated the effort and direction that our Prime Minister. Apparently Prime Minister Harper is a War of 1812 fan".

*The Federal Government, Heritage Minister James Moore* released details of the government's plans October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at an event in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. They include an education campaign to raise awareness among Canadians about the historic struggle. The federal government wants to mark the 200th anniversary of the war in 2012 in a big way and over the next four years.

*Investing In Our Future...* from page 4

Some people take great exception to these monies being allocated and the "Celebration" and there is quite some controversy. Here are just a few quotes obtained from the internet after this news was released...

*"This money should be better spent on Infrastructure, Education, Health Care and increasing the income of Canadian Seniors who are living below the poverty line..."*

*" Too many people want to give our country away. Canada became a great nation by doing the right things for the right reasons. Yes war is horrible - but it exists - and people put their lives on the line to keep our freedoms ...and yes there were "Canadians" here before 1867. Native peoples, Quebecois, former Americans. Even escaped slaves. Let's honour these men and women who built the foundations of our home and native land."*

*"We are NOT "celebrating" the War of 1812, as we do not like to think we are celebrating war and death! Rather we are "commemorating" the war. However, I have found that people are "celebrating" acts of courage and the creation of our nation. But when talking of the war in general it is a commemoration"*

Over the past few years, have interviewed several people and researched in my quest to why "living history" was important? A few responses are ...

Laurie Siblock, tells me that *" an important aspect of "living history" is that it helps preserve the knowledge of how objects of the past were used. If an artifact, say a rope-making machine, is only on static display and no one is operating it then it won't be long before the knowledge of how the artifact was used and the skills to use it are lost. In museum terms, the artifact is tangible heritage and the knowledge of how to use it and its cultural significance is intangible heritage. Living history helps preserve both tangible and intangible heritage for future generations." ..." part of understanding history is to help us not repeat the mistakes of the past. It helps us gain appreciation for what we have today". Laurie says "it is important to get into the mindset and understand the personalities of the people before us"! The richness in the past can inform you and help you understand the present".*

Although Anne Brooks is not a member of any re-enactment group, she does work with the *Upper Canada Military Re-enactment Society (UCMRS)*. She also keeps busy with the *Upper Thames Military Re-enactment Society*. Her response ... *"Many adults respond well to third person interpretation because they can ask a lot of questions about what could have happened. Children respond better to first person interpretation, so when we have our War of 1812 or WW1 Ed days the kids tend to absorb a lot more through this type of learning experience by War re-enactors.*



Watching from the Shore  
Naval Battle  
Wasaga Under Siege



British Encampment  
Spencerville Mill Heritage Fair



Walking into Living History  
Battle of Fort George

Please see *Investing In Our Future...* on page 6

*Investing In Our Future...* from page 5



*Discussing the Battle  
Battle of Fort George*



*The General  
Battle of Fort George*

*I personally tend to think that certain people learn better by different ways, no matter what their age is. Although I am a good reader, and spend a lot of time reading, there are many times when it is a lot easier for me to understand what is going on by seeing it actually happen. I do think there is great importance in projecting "living history" because it is a different way to learn about the past and really understand what could have taken place".*

*Heritage Minister James Moore said " the War of 1812 was a defining moment in Canada's history and had the English and French militias and Aboriginal Canadians not worked together with British military forces, the American invasions would not have successfully been repelled". "Without the War of 1812, Canada as we know it would not exist," said Moore. "It has led to 200 years of peace between Canada and the United States," Heritage Minister James Moore said in an interview. He goes on to say ... "We're two countries with two very different identities and we obviously disagree from time to time, but we have the longest border and the most successful neighbouring relationship of probably any two countries in the world ... and all of that started with the end of the War of 1812 and it's something to be recognized."... "Without the War of 1812, you don't have the expression of a clear, full Canadian identity; without the War of 1812 aboriginal Canadians would have probably seen the same future as American Indians saw; without the War of 1812 the French fact would not have been protected in North America. " Minister Moore was quoted saying ... "We don't do enough in this country to protect our past, to teach our past, to get kids involved and to learn about this country's brilliant history and the important moments of our past," Moore said. "There is no greater example of that than the War of 1812. Not enough Canadians know about the importance of the War of 1812. It was the fight for Canada. "*



*Walking into Living History  
Battle of Fort George*

## ***Battle of Fort George...***

By Gary McWilliams, The Festival Nomad

### **Niagara-on-the-Lake...**

Judi and I love to visit *Niagara-on-the-Lake*, and so does our friend, *Paul Putman*. When I read that *Fort George* was staging the reenactment *Battle of Fort George*, I knew that we had to go! I phoned Paul and asked him if he'd like to go with us and he immediately said yes. With that, we all bundled into our car on a beautiful Saturday morning and made our way to *Niagara-on-the-Lake* and the *Battle of Fort George*. Paul is a little unsteady on his feet so we made arrangements for Paul and Judi to enjoy a wonderful lunch in downtown *Niagara-on-the-Lake*. This way I could take my time and enjoy the Battle!

### **The Battle of Fort George...**

I arrived at *Fort George* just in time for the start of the Battle. British/Canadian troops and American troops were spread out over a large field. If you have never been to a battle reenactment, you should go! It's very exciting! There were about 250 re-enactors participating in the battle. Shortly after the battle began, gun and cannon smoke filled the air. Soldiers charged forward and then fell back. Rifle and cannon shots rang out, and soldiers on the battlefield dropped down "dead". It was all, of course, a wonderful act, but one that demonstrated both the heroics and horror of war. (To read the entire article please go to [http://war1812celebrations.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/festivals/2011/Summer/battle\\_fortgeorge.html](http://war1812celebrations.ontariofestivalsvisited.ca/festivals/2011/Summer/battle_fortgeorge.html))

## **Gearing Up for 1812...**

**War of 1812 Bicentennial Upcoming Events**

*Some events planned for 2012 are as follows:*

- January 22 - Queen Charlotte's Birthday Ball at Fort York (Toronto)
- February 16 - Burlington's Heritage Day
- February 17 - Grand River Watershed 15th Anniversary Heritage Day
- February 18 - "Living in 1812: Life on the Sandwich Frontier" (Windsor)
- February 18-19 - Battle of Ogdensburg (Prescott and Ogdensburg)
- February 19 - Parkhouse Museum (Amherstburg)
- February 29 - "Political Life in 1812" (South Edwardsburgh)
- May 5-6 - Battle of Longwoods (London)
- May 19-21 - Garrison Weekend at Fort Wellington (Prescott)



*"The Festival Nomad"*  
**Gary McWilliams**  
**Ontario Visited**



*"Cannon Fire"*  
**Battle of Fort George**  
**Niagara-on-the-Lake**



*"On the Battle Field"*  
**Battle of Fort George**  
**Niagara-on-the-Lake**

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