

Royal



Yorkers

*With the latest Advices, Foreign and Domeftick*

## REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL YORKER PARTY

KINGSTON – This year's party was one of the most successful by far. There were approximately 63 adults and 13 children in attendance. I know that many members from the Toronto/Hamilton area could not make the trek to Kingston, which was unfortunate, as they missed a terrific supper, many old faces, and friends from Eastern Ontario and Quebec.

Major Al Joyner and Serjeant Dave Smith are to be thanked for arranging with Col. Hazleton of CFB Kingston a beautiful room in the Vimy mess. A splendid three course meal was provided by an excellent catering crew, and the mess provided a lovely atmosphere for the meal and the speeches that followed.

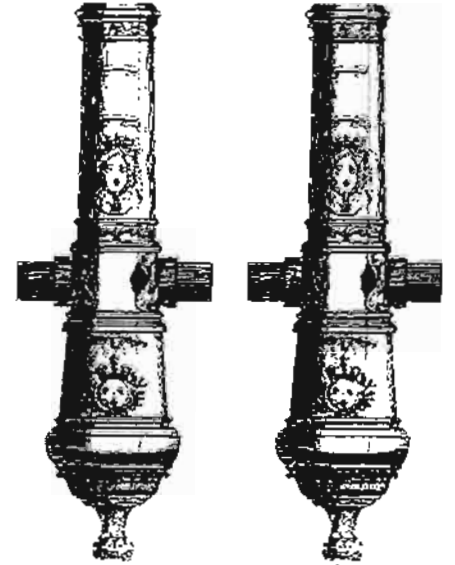
Two awards were handed out at the dinner. The first award was "Yorker of the Year" and this was presented to Andrea Putnam, also known as "Fred", for her efforts in the making of regimental kit and for her appearances as

fifer "Fred" at events. The second award was the "Grey Cup", which was awarded to Serjeant Sean Jeffries for his portrayal of a proper period NCO, attendance at events, and his demeanor of the period. Congratulations to both Andrea and Sean.

In the afternoon, prior to dinner, we were given an informative lecture by Brandt Zatterberg on Loyalist settlements in the Eastern townships. This was followed by our RSM, who provided a synopsis on Loyalism in America. It was presented in the RSM's typically dramatic and colourful style.

After dinner everyone mixed and mingled and talked to old friends and welcomed new ones, such as Bill, Gay and Justin Boggess and others. A video presentation was put on for everyone, some of these going back twenty years or more, when many of us were really young. This year's dinner has set a new standard to follow.

Lt. Col. James



## Announcements From Regimental HQ

I am pleased to announce the promotion in the Regimental gun crew of Colin Post to the rank of Serjeant of the Gun, vice Glen Smith's departure. Colin has served with the regiment for more than two decades, first as a Light Infantryman, then as a gunner with "Priapus". Colin is a highly trained and experienced gunner, having taken the BAR artillery course, plus he has many years of practice at events.

Peter Walker has been promoted to Corporal of the Gun. Peter had served with the Grenadiers for many years, then transferred to the gun at about the same time as Colin. Both have created an excellent and well coordinated partnership with the gun. Peter has also taken the BAR artillery course and like Colin is very experienced.

Colin's position is such that he is considered *the* authority on artillery and safety within the Northern Brigade.

Lt. Col. James



*2007 Yorker Party set new standard for this annual social function.*

# Coming Events

April 18	Drill - Ft York Armoury
May 16	Drill - Ft York Armoury
May 19-20	Tactics School - Westfield
June 9-10	Crawford Exp - Galion, OH
June 16-17	Black Creek - Toronto
June 16-17	Loyalist Landing - Adolphustown
July 7-8	Battle of Hubbardton
July 28-29	Battle of Oriskany
August 10	Fergus Highland Games
Aug 18-19	Garrison Wkend - Ft Niagara
Aug 18-19	Battle of Bennington (2 <sup>nd</sup> Btn)
Sept 8-9	Ticonderoga (US All-Up Event)
Sept 15	Thornhill Parade
Oct 6-7	Battle of Saratoga



*Time to ready yourself for the 2007  
campaign season.*

# Changes in the Light Company

After several years of consistent attendance levels at major all-up events and with recruit numbers steadily growing, the time has arrived to take Captain Watts Light Company KRR to the next level.

In preparing for a bold new future in recreating the past, the following changes in the Light Company will take effect at Westfield 2007.



**Corporal Matt Fudge will be raised to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.**

Matt joined the Light Company in May of 2002 and was immediately recognized to have strong leadership potential. The following spring, he was offered an opportunity to serve as Corporal where he established himself as an incredibly valuable NCO, often serving at times in the role of mess leader and brevetted sergeant, leading parties of Light Bobs on various important missions. Matt has also fallen into the natural role of leading the Light Company rifle section in the field. Compounded by his role as a seasoned corporal in the Company of Select Marksmen, Matt is a veteran NCO with the experience to be a great officer.

Matt's most valuable strength from his commanding officer's perspective is his easygoing charm. He has an invaluable ability to diffuse sensitive situations and still come out smelling clean and minty. No one is quite sure how he does it, but Alchemists all over Bohemia are obsessed with figuring out his magic touch.

Never one to hesitate in duty, Matt takes the dirtiest jobs without complaint and has an uncanny knack at proactively finding solutions to those tiny logistical problems that tend to creep up. As a negotiator, he's a man of pure reliability.

As Captain Sandford grows older,

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

the need for a "body double" increases. Considering Matt is as much a fashion aficionado as his Captain and is practically his twin, be prepared for a whole new level of mistaken identity as the Light Bobbsey Twins take to the field.



**Mike Carrier to be raised to Corporal**

Truth be told, in May of 2002 when shy and quiet Mike Carrier first joined the Lights under the gentle wing of the Doedens/Meadus Empire, no one could have foretold Mike's rise to be one of the star soldiers of the Lights.

In a Company (and regiment) where tactical independence is a valuable cornerstone in each individual, Mike leads by example. His meticulous drill, keen military awareness and of course a super human ability to fly over any obstacle, makes him one of the Company's model soldiers.

Around the tavern, with his partner in crime, senior Light Refugee Jenny Doedens, Mike has become an integral promoter of Yorker night life. He can often be found blushing over the embarrassing exploits of his fellow brothers, (or his Captain) or simply engaged in the thick of the conversation in his own quiet way.

An accomplished modern day pilot and an Infantryman with the Queen's Own Rifles, Airborne Company, Mike is not the most vocal of soldiers but as an example of sound military principles, Mike is bar none. You can just call him Corporal Crusher!



**Kent Nicholson to be raised to Lance Corporal**

Kent is one of those two sided coins. On one side, Kent is a noted defaulter of the classic Yorker technique, adding to a long list of famous names like Wannamaker, Dale, and Robertson (just to name a few). He excels in frustrating his officer to no

end, and dipping his hand in every practical joke since his joining in the spring of 2001.

However, on the other side of the coin, Kent is a tireless promoter of the Light Company and takes a keen interest in helping new recruits learn the subtleties of Yorker performance in the field. While Kent has great difficulty making sure there's coffee on the fire in the morning, he does have a real talent for tactical awareness and drill procedure - so I'm hoping he can learn about the coffee. Atypical of the sort, he's not a loud vox box about any of his knowledge and experience. Instead, Kent lends a gentle and helpful low key comment where needed. Combined with his years in service he is a natural fit as the junior Corporal of the Company.



**Mike Anderson to be raised to Lance Corporal**

Mike is a very active reanctor and wears many hats in the hobby. He is a member of the Glengarry Light Infantry 1812, Cushing's Battery US 4th Light Artillery for Civil War and Compagnie de Portneuf (Compagnie Franche de la Marine) for SYW. However, it is with the Yorkers that Mike shows a particular dedication to the hobby.

Mike has made a name for himself as a good solid soldier. Mike joined on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2003, and due to his involvement with other periods, there was a fear (like with so many) that we would rarely see him. The reality is Mike is regular stock and has shown a particular interest in the history aspect of the hobby. As a leader he has proven himself as a dependable mess leader and unswerving instrument of Light Company glory.

Please join me in welcoming these gentlemen to the command section of Captain Stephen Watts' Company.



## Home of Yorker Surgeon to Be Restored

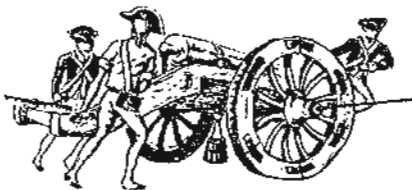
Shaun Wallace passed along a recent article from the *Seaway News*, which announced the granting of \$25,000 to the Lost Villages Historical Society for the restoration of the Stuart House at the Lost Villages Museum. The Stuart House was originally built by Dr. James Stuart, a surgeon in the King's Royal Regiment of New York. This house has been moved twice, after originally being constructed in the former "Lost Village" of Wales, Ontario.

Surgeon's Mate James Stuart/Stewart was Scottish born. James served as a Mate with the 42nd Black Watch during the Seven Years War. It is unknown, but probable, that he accompanied his regiment during their disastrous attack on the French lines at Ticonderoga in 1758. At the end of the war, he took his release and settled in New Stamford District of Ulster County as a farmer and doctor. He lived near the Charlotte River where Captain 'Spanish' John McDonell Scotus, the Grenadier commander in the 1st battalion, had his home.

Stuart was approached by John McDonell to join a company of loyalists from the New Stamford, Charlotte River and Harpersfield land patents. McDonell assembled his company in August 1777, marched into the Schoharie Valley and joined with Adam Crysler's associates and Schoharie Indians. When the McDonell/Crysler uprising was dispersed, McDonell led the men across Tryon County and through Indian Territory to Oswego where James formally joined the regiment as its Surgeon's Mate. He was the 1KRR's Mate throughout the war and is credited with fourteen years total of military service.

On disbandment, he settled alongside his friends in the Grenadiers in Royal Township No.3 (Osnabruk) with his wife Jean (nee Grant) and a young daughter.

McGeachie



## ~ Howse Tactics School ~ Westfield Village ~ May 19 & 20

If you haven't put your snow shovel away yet, and the barbeque is still safely stored in the basement, it may seem too early to think about the first event of the 2007 season. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security. This is the last newsletter before our season opener at Westfield Village on May 19-20. Again this year, we will make use of this terrific site to get ready for the coming campaign. As the Serjeant Major tells it, the rebels consider this "cheating", but in reality it is an excellent opportunity for the Northern Brigade to work on its drill and tactics before we leave Canadian soil. Those of you who attended the Hubbardton event last summer, and enjoyed annihilating the rebel line with our well orchestrated bayonet charge, will recall that this tactic was first practiced on the meadows of Westfield Village.

Although the program for the weekend is not yet finalized, a number of presentations and demonstrations have been nailed down.

- Musketman McGeachie will do a talk on the Battle of Johnstown.
- Private Lochiel of the 34<sup>th</sup> Regiment will let us in on something called "The New Tactik".
- Lt Copeland is going to give a much needed refresher on general firearms safety.
- Negotiations are under way to bring in a real, live cavalryman who will discuss the role of cavalry during the Rev War period.
- And of course with the raft of new officers in the Yorkers, there will be some sessions for them on how to be "officerly".

For those who have been to Westfield before, you will recall that the site offers a wonderful range of terrain, from open fields, woods, road networks and village settings. It makes for great tactical scenarios. And where else do we have better opposition to work against than when we



wargame with ourselves. Just to add a little spice to the mix, the Yorker gun (Priapus) will be present.

If you are still waffling on whether or not you will attend, then you must have forgotten that the Northern Brigade change of command ceremony is scheduled for Sunday afternoon. This will be our opportunity to honour and HUZZA our beloved Brigadier Gavin Watt as he steps down from command of the Northern Brigade, and to show our affection and undying devotion to Brigadier Christian Cameron as he takes command of the Brigade.

When you look at the Yorker calendar for 2007 you will notice that there are only two full-weekend events this season in Ontario, and one of them is

at Westfield. If you have an aversion to currency exchange, border crossings and long drives, you had best plan to come out on the Victoria Day weekend in May.

**Directions:** *From Hamilton* - Follow Hwy. #8 north-west through Dundas, cross Hwy. #5 and continue to Regional Road 552, just past Rockton. Turn right and follow 1.5 kilometres.

*From Toronto* - Take QEW west to Hwy. 403. Turn north on Hwy. #6 to Hwy. #5. Turn left on Hwy. #5 and then right on Hwy #8 to Regional Road 552 just past Rockton. Turn right and follow 1.5 kilometres.

*From Cambridge* - Follow Hwy. #8 south-east to Regional Road 552. Turn left and follow 1.5 kilometres.

### Blackpowder Safety

Recently, I was reminded that you can never be too careful about blackpowder safety.

My friends at one of the musket suppliers started stocking seventeenth century matchlock muskets recently. I borrowed one to see what it looked -- and fired - like.

Now, there are a few things you need to know about matchlocks. First of all, the ignition system on the lock is obviously not a flint striking steel. It

is a length of cotton rope permeated with saltpeter that burns slowly, but steadily. When you pull the trigger, there is a caliper which moves the glowing end of the cotton rope into the pan. The rest is simple chemistry.

An added feature to the matchlock is a neat little rotating cover which you can use to close off the pan. On muskets, this is the function of the bottom of the frizzen. Because there is no

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Crawford Expedition ~ Galion, Ohio ~ June 9 - 10

In the February issue of the Newsletter some *misguided* sergeant claimed that, with the passing of Yorktown, "it is time to say farewell to the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary events". Not so fast! In fact, in 1782 the war shifted to the frontier, which gives us at least one more shot at a 225<sup>th</sup> event this year.

For the rebels 1782 became known as "The Year of Sorrow". The winter had been so mild that Indian raids against the frontier settlements barely ended before they began again in February. In Pennsylvania the continental troops were so poorly fed, clothed and equipped that they were totally incapable of responding in defense of the settlers.

Finally, the inhabitants of Washington County took the matter into their own hands by launching an attack on three Moravian mission towns, inhabited by 150 neutral Delawares. On March 6 the assailants rounded up 90 of the Moravian Indians, who peacefully surrendered on the assurance that they would be taken to Fort Pitt where they would be fed and kept safe until the end of the war. The 90 men, women and children were confined in their chapel where they waited, still trusting that they would be moved to Pittsburgh as indicated by their captors. Outside the chapel the mob debated what should be done with their prisoners. At dawn the Moravian Delawares were dragged, two or three at a time to nearby buildings, that were referred to by the white participants as the "slaughter houses", and dispatched with a blow from a cooper's mallet. In total 29 men, 27 women and 34 children were murdered. (*Gee - Innocent people being killed at a church. Where have I heard this scenario before? And who was accused of doing it?*).

Having been *successful* in their first initiative of the year, a second raiding party of 488 rebel militiamen was assembled at Mingo Bottom under the command of Colonel William Crawford. Their objective was to surprise and destroy the Indian settlements at Sandusky. Crawford was a veteran

officer, with more than 25 years of experience commanding troops such as those he led on this occasion. Even so, he was totally frustrated by their lack of discipline. They were slow to break camp in the morning, they wasted their provisions, they strayed away from the column to hunt, and were forever pausing to debate what to do next. Although they were mostly mounted, after setting out on May 25, 1782, they covered only 50 miles in their first four days and 100 miles in the next six days. This slow progress proved fatal, as the expedition soon lost its essential element of surprise. Captain Caldwell of Butlers Rangers marched with his company and a group of "Lake Indians" to the assistance of the alarmed Sandusky Indians. In total his force numbered roughly 260 soldiers and warriors. Ernest Cruikshank picks up the story from here:

"At noon on the King's birthday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 1782, Caldwell learned that the enemy were only a few miles away, and he at once advanced to meet them at the junction of the two paths, where he could protect either of the Indian villages from attack at the same time. On his appearance, Crawford retired into a large grove of copsewood, surrounded on all sides by open ground, which furnished good

cover for horses and men, and gave him a decided advantage until the rangers managed to gain a foothold in a projecting angle of woods, and gradually pushed back their antagonists until Caldwell was able to place most of his force under cover. The skirmish then became very brisk, with a prodigious amount of yelling and firing on both sides, but little loss on either. Caldwell, however, was soon badly wounded by a musket ball, which passed through both his thighs, and forced him to quit the field. The command then devolved to Lieut John Turney, a veteran soldier of many years service, while Capt. Matthew Elliott directed the movements of the Indians. They continued to gain ground until night put an end to the firing. The Americans had lost about twenty-five men, their assailants only five or six. Both parties encamped where they lay, and at daybreak Turney renewed the attack, but observed that the enemy seemed reluctant to continue the action. However, they made two feeble attempts to charge, which were easily repulsed. At noon McKee opportunely arrived with 140 Shawanese, and enabled Turney to surround the Americans. Throughout the afternoon he continued to press his advantage, and at dark felt sanguine of

*(Continued on page 6)*





## An 18th Century Lady Writes From Niagara

The following article came to Nancy Watt from Picky Parnell. It concerns the life of Isabella Graham who lived at Fort Niagara from 1768 to 1772. These excerpts were taken from an article by Brian Leigh Dunnigan, which was published in The Niagara Advance Historical Issue, 1987.

All the way up the river is planted with beautiful islands, but in the space of about 60 miles before we entered Lake Ontario, I dare say we saw a thousand islands..."

"At Fort Niagara... the few women we have amongst us [soldiers wives] have so much to do to wash for the Officers and they make so much by it, they won't come out. This distresses the Doctor who can't bear to see me but dressed and ready to entertain him at all times or whoever he may bring with him. There is one of our Officers gone to Detroit. He [John] has given him a commission to bring one [woman] with him, black or white, upon any terms to buy or hire."

Dr. Graham was able to purchase two young Indian slave girls or "panis". Indian Slavery was common in the Great Lakes Region, and Bell thus obtained help with her growing family.

November 23, 1769, she wrote: "I am so lucky as to have one more opportunity of writing you before we be shut up for the winter... I despair now of any accounts before the Spring."

Some of Isabella's lists were filled with lists of fabric or clothing which she asked to be shipped to New York and then on to Niagara.

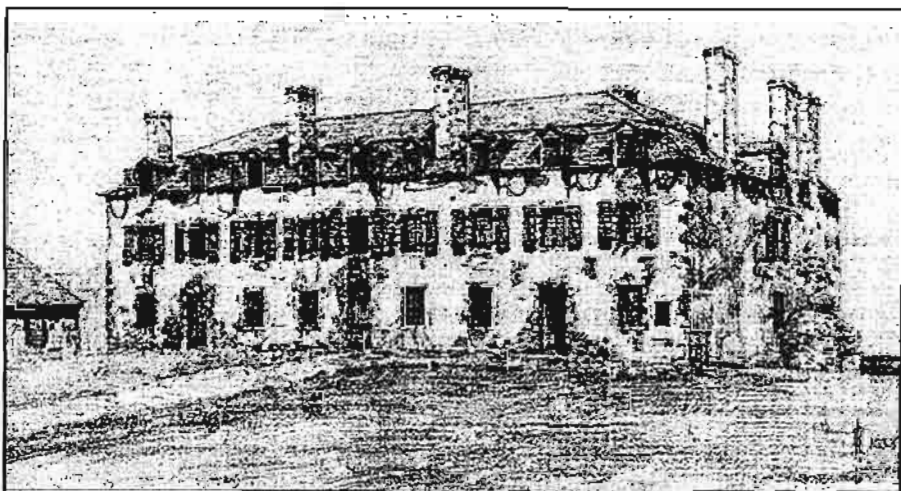
"2 pieces linen about 1/6 yard one to be made in shifts, the other sent as is.

1 piece common purple & white cal-

One of our most interesting discoveries of recent years has been a collection of letters written from Fort Niagara by a woman named Isabella Graham. Mrs. Graham, wife of Fort Niagara's Surgeon, lived at the post from 1768 until 1772. Most of her letters were penned to her parents in Scotland. (Six letters from Niagara, and six more from Montreal and New York.)

September 10, 1768 - On a voyage up the St. Lawrence.

"I never in my life slept sounder than in the woods, except the two first nights the first of which there was a parcel of Indians got drunk beside us and they made such a wild hallowing and worse, I was very much frightened... [We had] plenty of time to stroll at pleasure as the boats moved so slowly at some very rapid places they [the boatmen] were obliged to unload them and fly, all hands to one boat, and haul them up one by one with ropes they themselves wading in the river up to their feet for the strength of the current..."



(Continued from page 5)

capturing the whole body. Probably he would have succeeded if the Indians had not directed their sentries to fire at stated intervals during the night. This indicated the weakest part of the line to the enemy, and at midnight they made a vigorous rush upon it and broke through. Most of them were mounted and darkness favoured their flight, but they were pursued with the tireless energy born of insatiable hate. The chase continued many days, and the last man that fell beneath the tomahawk of the Indians was struck down on the very banks of the Ohio. Caldwell and McKee estimated that 250 of the fugitives were killed or perished in the woods... In the two days' skirmishing but one ranger was killed and two wounded, besides Capt. Caldwell. Of the Indians, interpreter Le Vallier and four warriors were killed and eight warriors wounded."

Colonel William Crawford received the worst fate. He was pulled down by pursuing Delaware warriors, and in retaliation for the slaughter of the Moravian Delewares, he was tortured and burned at the stake. He died a cruel, prolonged and painful death.

So, that's the story of the Crawford Expedition, and the reason why the Yorkers will be heading to Ohio on June 9-10. Yes, one more 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary to mark on your calendar. More details about the event will be available in the next newsletter.

DWP

ico,  
3 dozen thread stockings,  
3 vest for the Doctor and color  
striped,  
a green satin tipit for Jessey."

On a hopeful note, Isabella reported to her parents that the Officers of Fort Niagara were collecting money to hire Indians to carry mails or "expresses" along the frozen shores of Lake Ontario.

"I have brought you another granddaughter and am for the time, very well. As the name of John is very dear to me, I intend calling her Joan which is coming as near it as I can with a girl & wish if it is God's will, I may have no more at least till we return to Scotland."

Despite Bell's wish, another daughter, Isabella, was born at Fort Niagara in February, 1771. Other letters home during 1770 spoke of the Indian trade, family matters and the items available from garrison sutler, Edward Poliard. Belle requested books and her tastes are revealed in her choices - "sermons, lyric poems, catechisms, hymns, and spelling books."

One letter, written on February 3, 1771, provides a concise view of daily activities.

"This has been the mildest winter remembered by any of the people on this ground. A few days ago fell the first snow worth mentioning; neither have we had much frost. We have all, thank God, enjoyed perfect health since I last wrote to you, except, what we must expect. the children now and then a little fretful with their teeth. They are both stout hearty girls. Jessy talks much of grandmama, and won't allow that she is a Canadian, but a Scotch girl. My two Indian girls come on very well indeed. The eldest milked the cows all summer; she washes and irons all the clothes for the family, scrubs the floors, and does the most part of the kitchen work. The young one's charge is the children, and some other little turns, when the infant is asleep. I teach them to read and to sew when they have any spare time. As for me, I find that I have enough to do to superintend. You may be sure I help a little too now and then, I make and mend what is necessary for the

family, for I must be tailor, mantua-maker and milliner. As I am the only (Officer's) wife in the place, we have a regular tea-table, and now and then a little frugal supper; for the Doctor has come more into my way of thinking, and does not insist upon cutting a figure as much as some time ago. He is seldom out, and never but when I am with him. We are easy in our circumstances and want for nothing that is necessary; in short, my ever dear parents, my life is easy and pleasant.

"We find the newspapers full of preparations for war; may the Lord dispose all hearts to peace, for I hate the sound, though it is the wish of the greatest number about me.

"We have lately had several visits from a great family. The Chief of the



Seneca nation having a daughter not well, he brought her to the Doctor to see what could be done for her; he, his squaw or lady, and daughters, breakfasted with us several times. I was as kind, and made all the court to them I could, though we could not converse but by an Interpreter. I made the daughters some little presents, and the Doctor would not be fee'd. You will say this was foolish; but... who knows but these little services may one day save our scalps. There have been several threatenings of an Indian War: Thank God, it seems to be quite hushed again.

"War with civilized nations is nothing to War with Indians. They have no

mercy, nor give any quarter to man, woman or child, all meet the same fate, except where they take a liking to particular persons, those they adopt as their children and use them as such." If you would like to read more about the life of Isabella Graham, you may want to checkout:

[http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits\\_religion/graham.htm](http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits_religion/graham.htm).

You can also find the full text of Isabella Graham's book, *The Power of Faith: Exemplified in the Life and Writings of the Late Mrs. Isabella Graham*, at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16276>.

The following is a passage from the first chapter:

"Mrs. Graham always considered the time she passed at Niagara as the happiest of her days, considered in a temporal view. The officers of the regiment were amiable men, attached to each other, and the ladies were united in the ties of friendship. The society there, secluded from the world, exempt from the collision of individual and separate interests, which often create so much discord in large communities, and studious to promote the happiness of each other, enjoyed that tranquility and contentment which ever accompany a disinterested interchange of friendly offices. But this fort, being detached from other settlements, the garrison were deprived of ordinances and the public means of grace, and the life of religion in the soul of Mrs. Graham sunk to a low ebb. A conscientious observance of the Sabbath, which throughout life she maintained, proved to her at Niagara as a remembrance and revival of devotional exercises. She wandered on those sacred days into the woods around Niagara, searched her Bible, communed with God and herself, and poured out her soul in prayer to her covenant Lord. Throughout the week, the attentions to her friends, her domestic comfort and employments, and the amusements pursued in the garrison, she used to confess, occupied too much of her time and of her affections."

# Officers Write Home

John Houlding, an ex-Yorker, and author of "Fit For Service", sent some quotations that a friend of his collected. Gavin Watt

*Captain William Dansey, 33d. Light Infantry, Philadelphia March 20, 1778 [to his mother]*

...I see I am in the List of wounded at the Brandywine you would have been very unhappy had you not heard from me as there is no Distinction in a List whether a person is slightly or dangerously wounded... I am almost wishing for a Snug Birth [berth] [ie., a cushy job] of that kind for I find there is nothing to be gained by fighting with Light Infantry but hard Knocks [and] broken Bones, and as to the honour of it if it was not for Self Satisfaction it is all a farce, Merit goes by Favour, and we are only tools for the favorites to work with, consequently fall into igno-

rant, unskilful Hands, and like the mechanic's Tools we suffer, and if the Work does not succeed we are blamed, if it does we have no more merit than the Carpenter's Ax or Saw in short an Officer of Light Infantry's Character is always at Stake and if he does ever so well the merit becomes other peoples, whose Impudence or Sycophancy gains them the Ears of People in power, but I'll persevere.

*Captain Lieutenant Francis Downman, R. A. -September 24, 1777:*

"If the rebels had the least spirit or resolution they might have defended this pass," sneered Captain Lieutenant Francis Downman of the Royal Artillery about the easy Schuylkill crossing. "Not that they would have prevented our getting over," he cynically added, "but they might have killed us a number of men." In the main, though, after two campaigns, "The rebels fly before us; they run whenever we advance," Downman noted with contempt, as did other British and Hessian officers. "They say we are mad or drunk or we

would never dash in among them as we do," as happened at Paoli. "Our light infantry are the finest set of fellows in the world for this mode of fighting."

*Gen. James Grant to General Edward Harvey, Philadelphia, October 20, 1777:*

"I gave You Hopes for September; but did not pretend to prophesy or form an opinion about future operations, not just seeing my way clearly, through Woods, as difficult country & bad Roads, with weak Horses & without Maps Friends or even Guides who could be depended upon, but I always look for success, nothing is impossible to British Troops so much accustomed to fire as ours have been, for as Erskine once told you at a Dinner in London which you'll recollect "You may say what You please Gentlemen but nothing will make a Soldier but Service & a damned deal of it too which Lord Cornwallis says You made Erskine repeat, having heard perfectly well at first what He said"

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frizzen on a matchlock, the job of this cover is to prevent the powder from falling from the pan as you load the main charge at the muzzle - or so I thought.

Anyway, one day I decided to take the matchlock outside to fire. I am quite careful -- if not paranoically careful -- about blackpowder safety and the worst musket accident I have ever had was more than twenty years ago when I sliced an artery on my hand with a flint. With the matchlock, I had a magazine established and was in possession of one paper cartridge at a time. I was firing in a field with close supervision. I exercised all of the normal standards of safety. However, what I was lacking was an intimate knowledge of what that little rotating cover was REALLY there for.

As it turns out, when the trigger is pulled and the match lowers to the powder in the pan, it does not always fire immediately. The first time I tried, it took a second to ignite. The second time, it did not ignite at all. I waited



for the requisite ten seconds, and then made the crucial mistake of lowering the musket without rotating the cover over the pan. This allowed me to learn - very quickly and persuasively -- that moving the musket allows just the right amount of air to flow over the match and bring it to a brighter glow. That glow is just what the powder needs to ignite.

Fortunately, I was wearing my glasses and it went off a good distance from my face. That said, my hair was lightly singed. My face only turned red, not black. It turns out, that the little rotating cover is there so that if you misfire, you can close off the pan and safely lower the musket without risking a flare up, which just goes to show you that blackpowder is very treacherous and volatile stuff.

I have a friend who is the master

firearms instructor at the Ontario Police College in Aylmer. He likes to tell his students that the really cruel thing about firearms is that 9 times out of 10, you can get away with making a mistake. That tenth time, however, is the one that kills you or someone next to you. The cruel part is that the first nine mistakes lead you to believe that you are infallible; making it far more likely that you will make the tenth mistake.

I thought I would share this with everyone as a timely reminder that blackpowder safety should never be out of our minds. Historical accuracy is laudable, but it will not impress the staff in the emergency room if you have just blown yourself up by cutting corners while loading or not being sufficiently cautious.

Rob Stewart  
Duncan's Coy

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