

Historic Niagara Frontier

By SAMUEL W. HIPPLER



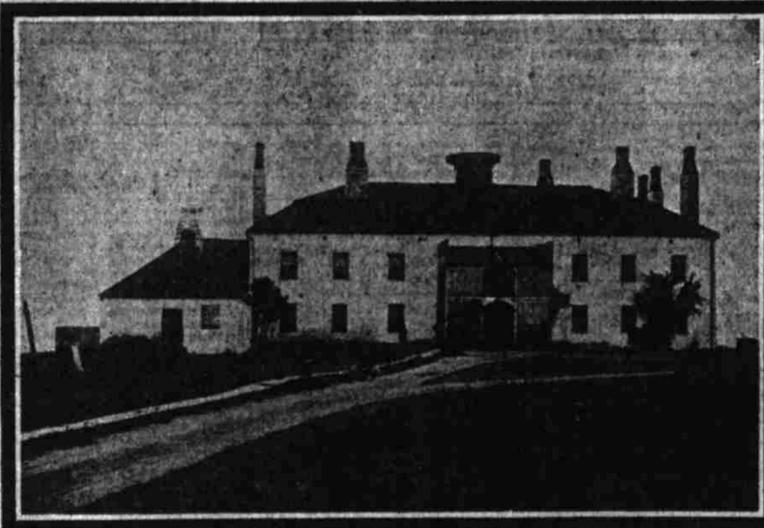
OLD BLACK HOUSE AT FORT NIAGARA BUILT IN 1771

STONE MARKING PLACE WHERE GEN. BROOK FELL

MONUMENT AT BRIDY PLANE BATTLEFIELD

BROOK'S MONUMENT QUEENSTON HEIGHTS

SOLDIERS MONUMENT AT OLD FORT ERIE, OLD BRIDE WALES SHOWING



THE CASTLE, ONE OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDINGS, OLD FORT NIAGARA

THE LAUREL SECOND MONUMENT

GHOSTS there be—ghosts of past achievements—who steal from the shadowy depths of nowhere, and in serried ranks, pass for silent review along the paths of memory. Their bugles ring no cheering melody, their drumbeats give no sound, their voices have no tones and their footsteps fall with noiseless tread on the misty roads of an imagination that grows with age.

The old constable at Fort Erie, dozing in the sunrays of a warm October day, shifted uneasily as the slats on the hickory bench made ridges in his back, and with eyes still closed, gently murmured, "Ten rods more and all is safe."

The ghosts were walking for him. He is himself an old soldier—a soldier of the crown, with flowing galoways of a vintage long antedated and a memory that serves him well. Clothed in the uniform of the Canadian militia—black, with natty red trimmings—he keeps his daily vigil on the site of old Fort Erie and passes his days in peaceful jantourship of the bloody plot. The site of Old Fort Erie—the scene of many a sanguinary conflict—has been inclosed and made a part of the Canadian National Park system. It is opposite Buffalo, on the Canadian side, at the head of Niagara river, and stands as a grim specter of the British barracks that guarded the river in the days when there was enmity between America and Great Britain.

On the American side of the river is the site of old Fort Porter, now a beautiful barracks where soldiers are sent to rest up after hard service, and 33 miles away, at the mouth of the river, glaring across at each other in peaceful rivalry now are Forts George and Niagara, the former in Canada and the latter in the United States. When the day is clear and the glasses are good, all this long frontier stretches before the eyes of tourists from the top of Brock's monument, marking the site of the battle of Queenston heights. But the old constable at Fort Erie needs no wastebasket climb to view the panorama. The historic ground of the Niagara frontier is familiar to him. Slumber does for him what travel does for others. The noonday does not only permit a realistic color the landscape of the historic Niagara frontier, but summons by companies, by brigades, by armies and perhaps sometimes alone and unattended the almost forgotten heroes of the day. As he shifts his position and murmurs "Ten rods more and all is safe," who can tell what he is seeing.

The ghosts are walking for him. Perhaps they come in overwhelming numbers, those stout-hearted, red-coated soldiers, driving the colonists before them and cheering for King George and the dragon. Perhaps it is a mighty race to see whether the sturdy American or the redcoats out on a foraging expedition shall reach the fort before the body of American patriots shall succeed in cutting them off. Perhaps the ghosts are those of the War of 1812, and the sleeping constable sees the rout that attended the British in the first attack on Buffalo, July 1, 1812. Perhaps his slumber is lighted by the blaze of burning Buffalo. The village was destroyed by redcoats and Indians in a later and successful attack on December 12 and 14 of the same year, when but one residence was left in the ruins. Fort Erie stands out in strong contrast to any of these. Mayhap it is a bright June day, with flower-scented air and balmy breeze. There is no sign of war, and all is serene and peaceful. The constable and that heavy breathing of the solitary figure in the constable's dream—a young girl with wavy hair and burning cheeks, whose journey is beset with many difficulties. She is alone along a secluded roadway, now climbing a prickly hedge, anon struggling through swamp and morass, proceeding with undaunted determination toward her destination, passing the stern and unyielding route, avoiding here a figure that carries a gun and looks like a soldier without uniform and now hiding until some suspicious traveler has passed. And then all is changed. We are in a dirty, with the smuck of lowlands and barnyards clinging to her skirts, she dashes into a British camp. There is the call to arms, the quick and silent preparation, the forced march into a bloody battle, and again—a balmy June day.

This sweet girl of the old redcoat's dream—a Canadian Joan of Arc—was named Laura Secord. A monument has been erected to her memory in the old graveyard near the battlefield of the Niagara frontier. Not satisfied with perpetuating her bravery, the people of her race, with the characteristic British bombast and vanity, have included in the tribute to her memory a touching advertisement of how a mere handful of British deserters and an American army, says the inscription on the second monument:

"To perpetuate the name and fame of Laura Secord, who walked alone nearly 16 miles by a circuitous, difficult and perilous route, through woods and swamps and miry roads, to warn a British outpost at De Cows Falls of an intended attack, and thereby enabled Lieutenant Fitz Gibbon, on the 24th of June, 1813, with less than 50 men of her majesty's forty-ninth regiment, about 15 militiamen and a small force of Six Nations and other Indians, under Captain William Johnson Kerr and Dominique Ducharme, to surprise and attack the enemy at Beechwoods (or Beaver Dam), and after a short engagement capture Colonel Henshew, the British commander, and his entire force of 542 men, with two fieldpieces."

—served one of the guns on a British ship that went down. He often told me of that battle, and in my dreams I saw him training his gun and lighting his fuse for one last shot before the water should run into the nozzle of the gun on the heavy ascending ship. Just as he fired I woke up, and I thought that the noise of the shot had awakened me. But the battle was fought too long ago and the scene of the engagement was too far away for me to have heard the shot. It must have been something else. I am an old man now and things are not always clear to me. This ladies and gentlemen is old Fort Erie. Here we see remains of the old British barracks or bullet-proof retreat, and there are the earthen breastworks thrown up at angles that enabled the defenders to meet the attacking force with a terrible fire. Here on the British side you see—

And so he wandered on through the intricate mazes of the lecture long ago learned by heart, while we sometimes listened and sometimes lost ourselves in floating (?) conjecture as to what the place might have looked like in the days that he told about—in the days when frontier fights, revolutions, international squabbles of all kinds and numerous hands of the American Indians made the tenure of life all too uncertain.

To properly inspect all the points of interest—all the battlefields, scenes of ambush and terrible slaughter along the banks of Niagara river, on both sides should take about a week. The Niagara frontier fairly breathes with historic interest. From the days of the great explorer, La Salle, and the time of Father Hennepin—the first white man to see the falls of Niagara, down on through the years that witnessed the war of 1812 and the burning of Buffalo to the shores of the river, have continually been trodden by the makers of nations. Blood letting there was too, and here the British and French have clashed, redman has fought and scalped his white brother and American engaged in revolution have grappled in deadly conflict men of their own flesh and blood. Soldiers of the mother country have engaged the Indians to swoop down upon the settlers along the shores of Niagara river, and raised no hand to stop the savage cruelties upon men whose blood was as red, if their own coats were not as soiled, as the hirings in the pay of King George of England. Through years of peace we come to the time when the eagle of war again flapped their wings, and countless slaves escaping from the South during the civil war, were rowed across Niagara river by the hands of freedom in Canada. And then when war was declared with Spain during the administration of McKinley, and the Spanish ambassador, De Loma, was given a polite intimation that his room was more desirable than his company, he made for Niagara, and crossing to Niagara Falls, Canada, attracted the eyes of the diplomatic world in that direction, while the state department at Washington was demanding of the British government that he be expelled from his point of vantage. Again in the city of Buffalo, on the shores of the Niagara river, an interesting citation reared in the year 1901 the beautiful pan-American exposition, where, in the month of September President McKinley met death by assassination.

Niagara river is virtually a strait, separating the United States from Canada and connecting Lake Erie with Lake Ontario. It is about a mile wide and 35 miles long. Its entire length is dotted with islands, which aggregate in all 11,000 acres. One of these called Goat Island is right at the brink of Niagara Falls, and separates the river into two channels, each one falling over a precipice 150 feet high. Early explorers from the East followed the waterways inland, going along the St. Lawrence river to Lake Ontario, in ceaseless effort to discover the western country and then along the banks of Niagara river to Lake Erie and farther west. Thus Niagara river early became the scene of battles between the whites and Indians, and being regarded as the water gateway of the west was the scene of a continual content be-

tween the French and English for control. The French in the early stages were the most enterprising, and history shows that as early as 1657 a French officer, De Nonville, threw up earthworks on the site of what is now Fort Niagara, on the American side of the river. The Daughters of the American Revolution, the Children of the American Revolution and the Niagara Frontier Historical society.

Truman G. Avery is the president of the Niagara Frontier Landmarks' association and George D. Emerson the secretary. It was Mr. Emerson who kindly made out the itinerary for our party of tourists and thus guided them through one of the most historic territories on the continent today. The society in question has only been in existence from November of 1900, but since that its members have located and appropriately marked several sites noted for events that had an important bearing on the history or development of the nation.

It will be news to many people to know that as early as 1848 a newspaper in the Indian language was printed in America. Such is a fact, however, and I saw the house in which it was printed. One of the first places we visited was the Seneca mission-house, which was erected prior to the year 1851, and is still standing on Buffam street in the city of Buffalo, our starting point. It is in good preservation. Its heavy hewn black walnut beams seeming to be good for many years to come. In this house from 1851 to 1854, dwelt the Rev. Ashes Wright, missionary to the Senecas, who with specially prepared type, printed parts of the Scriptures, hymns, spelling books and a newspaper in the Seneca language.

It shall be my aim in the remaining pages of my manuscript to refrain from mentioning facts and figures that are of interest only to the particular locality we are now visiting. Of more than passing interest perhaps is the McKinley monument, standing in Niagara square before the home of President Millard Fillmore, who resided there from the time of his retirement from office until his death, in the year of 1874. During his administration, if memory serves, the nation gained cheap postage, the enlargement of the national capital and the Perry treaty, which opened Japan to the world. From here we went to Fort Porter, and in its vicinity found many spots where cannons and batteries had been stationed, especially during the war with Great Britain in 1812. Coming down into more recent history, we found an immense boulder marked with a commemoration of the fighting Thirtieth regiment that captured San Juan Hill in the Spanish war and later did heroic service in the Philippines. Part of a brigade had been stationed at Fort Porter before the war, and was given a great send off when it went to the front. The send off, however, was nothing compared to the reception it met when the company came back—a little handful of tattered and battered heroes. The Thirtieth, it will be remembered, was also one of those regiments that did such remarkable service preserving order in San Francisco after the recent earthquakes there.

Farther down the river is the site of an old ferry across Niagara river, at a point where formerly there was a great black rock. This rock was destroyed in the building of the Erie canal—in its time the most famous of artificial waterways—but the name still lingers, and a large part of Buffalo is known today as Black Rock. The ferry has long since disappeared, but before it ended its days of usefulness thousands of immigrants to Michigan and the middle

west passed over it to their destination. A little farther down we came to the site of the old Black Rock shipyards, where a portion of Perry's fleet was fitted out, and where, in 1813, was built the Walk-in-the-Water, the first steamboat on the lakes. At this point Senecaquida creek enters into the river, and it was on the bridge crossing this that in 1814—on August 3 to be exact—the second battle of Black Rock took place. Twelve hundred British attacked 350 Americans and made three assaults; the Americans held the bridge nobly and repulsed the British, saving their supplies. The first battle of Black Rock was fought near by, and it was also a victory for the Americans.

There are few sites, however, of greater interest or of more historic value than the spot where, in 1678, La Salle, the noted explorer, built the Griffon, the first vessel other than a birch bark canoe to ever sail on the Great Lakes of America. Near this spot a little settlement bears the name of La Salle, and the Niagara Landmarks' association, which I have frequently referred to, has erected a monument on the spot.

Midway on the road between the city of Niagara Falls and Lewiston are Bloody Run and Devil's Hole. Here the Senecas ambushed a British supply train on the first return journey over a newly reconstructed road that ran from Fort Niagara, at the mouth of the Niagara river to Fort Schlosser, on the banks of Canada river, a little to the south of the present town of Niagara Falls. Both forts were in the chain of posts used to keep open the line of trade along the river. Only thirty men out of 100 escaped from the ambush. The same Indians ambushed a British relieving force, which hurried after them on news of the massacre reaching Lewiston. Only eight escaped from the second ambush, which occurred on the 14th of September, 1783.

Father Hennepin's name is associated with history. He was the first white man who ever saw the mighty cataract of Niagara, and the Niagara Frontier Historical association has discovered what it believes to be the site of Hennepin's landing and the cabin which he built. It is near the present village of Lewiston. On the heights above the town is still located a Tuscarora Indian reservation, and near by, below the mountain, is the site of General Van Rensselaer's camp, the first military camp on this frontier during the war of 1812. On the hill above the Lewiston ferry landing is the site where General (then colonel) Winfield Scott planted his battery which protected the American troops in the first American battle of the war, on the morning of October 3, 1812.

From Lewiston we hurried to Fort Niagara, which Mr. Emerson told us was the most historic point in the whole Niagara frontier. On the road between Lewiston and Youngstown, the town nearest to the fort, we passed a place known as Five-Mile Meadow, where, on the night of December 15, 1813, the British landed for their attack on Fort Niagara. History tells us that they won, and then proceeded at their leisure to devastate the whole frontier, their operations including the burning of Buffalo. Earlier in my article I have referred to the establishment of Fort Niagara. From this place the French and English held away over a vast empire from Albany westward. First one and then the other being in control. In 1794 it became an American stronghold. One of the principal features of Fort Niagara is the magazine built in 1784. It came into the public eye in 1839, by reason of the incarceration there of William Morgan, who conducted an anti-Masonic crusade. He disappeared from the dungeons—nobody knows how—and was never seen since. There was dispute as to whether he had been spirited away by Masons and killed, or had been allowed to escape. Still standing on the grounds of Fort Niagara—now an important United States army barracks—are two old blockhouses, built in 1771 and 1772. They, it will be thus seen, antedate the revolution, and are pronounced by experts to be the most precious specimens of their kind. Opposite Fort Niagara is Fort George, built originally as an auxiliary to Fort Niagara at a time when all that territory was British. Farther up the river, about oppo-

site Lewiston, we come to the site of the battle of Queenston Heights, the site of Fort Drummond, and on Queenston is the most impressive spot on all the Niagara frontier. A grassy knoll, resembling in some respects the land side of Quebec, is crowned with the Brock monument, a tall and graceful shaft which marks the site of the battle of Queenston Heights, on October 13, 1812, when an American force of 1,600 militia and a regiment of regulars attacked the British under the command of General Isaac Brock. The Americans were defeated, and their commander, Colonel Winfield Scott, was captured. Every other commissioned officer was either killed or wounded. On the British side General Brock lost his life, and many a British soldier found his last resting place. The view from Brock's monument is 'twas the tourists being enabled to see as far as the eye can reach, almost to the head of the Niagara river on the south, and seven miles along Niagara river to its broadening mouth and Lake Ontario on the north. The foot of the monument is surrounded with cannon, and a stairway on the inside enables those who desire to reach the top of it. It is 135 feet high and was erected in 1852. From its base a general descent takes the tourist to the cenotaph, which was erected in 1860 by the present King of England—then Prince of Wales—who visited this country in 1850. The cenotaph marks the exact spot where General Brock fell during the battle. On the heights near the monument may still be traced the outlines of Fort Drummond, and on the very edge of the cliff the redan battery of their period. General Brock was first buried in a bastion of old Fort George, previously referred to, the ruins of which are still in a remarkable state of preservation. It was built in 1796, enlarged later, and played a most important part in the war of 1812.

In the Canadian town of Niagara are many points of interest. The old buildings are Navy Hall (built in 1729), where was held the first session of the parliament of Upper Canada, and the old barracks used by Butler's Rangers during the revolutionary war as a base for their raids into American territory when they, with the aid of Indians, made the lives of frontier residents for miles around a constant source of worry. We also saw Fort Mifflin, a saraguna, built by the British in 1814.

Coming along the river from Brock's monument south—or, to be more strictly speaking, up stream, we have gone down stream on the American side, to the battlefield of Lundy's Lane, which is marked by a monument, a picture of which appears on this page. This monument was erected in 1836, and commemorates the victory of the British-Canadian forces on the twenty-fifth of July, 1814, and is in grateful remembrance of the brave men who died on that day fighting for the United States. The monument was erected by the Canadian parliament. Passing up the river still, we come to the site of Fort Chippewa, built in 1790, and the battlefield of Chippewa. Then on to old Fort Erie, which was disturbed the slumbers of the old British soldier and listened to an interesting description of the historic site. Fort Erie was built by Montross in 1764, built again in 1776, rebuilt in 1790, again in 1791 and a fourth time in 1807, though none of the latter times on the exact former location. Near the fort are the sites of three British siege works, a line of earthworks constructed by British engineers in 1791, and a line of earthworks, still further strengthened by blockhouses of the 1812 period.

Nearby is the scene of the famous battle of Bloody Run, the really exciting incident of the ridiculous Fenian raid when a handful of ill-advised fanatics, after gathering on an island in Niagara river, landed on Canadian soil, prepared to invade the United States. The British for the way in which the fanatics treated Ireland. The engagement soon became a disgraceful rout. This was in 1866.

A little distance away Niagara river broadens out, and the widening of the stream's expanse into the boom of Lake Erie marks the termination of the historic Niagara frontier and the end of our story.

RABBITS STOP TRAINS

IN Texas the jackrabbit is no longer looked on as a means of food sport. He has increased by the millions until he threatens to not only devour all the vegetation of hundreds of square miles in the southwestern section of the state, but here lately, spurred on by desperate hunger, he has begun holding up railway trains by the simple process of setting himself killed by the thousands, and so grasping up the rails and blocking the engine wheels that the most powerful locomotives have been forced to come to a stop while the train hands have gone forth and cleaned up the right of way.

Hunger is forcing millions of jackrabbits to come close to the more thickly settled sections of Texas, and where the wire fences are used to keep them out they have started burrowing underneath. The bright glare of the locomotive headlights has attracted them along the railroad line at night. This is proved by the fact that the railroads have had no trouble with their trains from the jackrabbits except at night. During the day the rabbits attend strictly to making entrance into the farm lands. The Texas legislature has decided to spend over \$100,000 next year in an endeavor to stem the tide of the jackrabbit invasion. It is hoped to find some disease germs with which the rabbits can be inoculated and so most of them be swept away. The United States government will also be asked to assist in the scientific search for some method of killing off the pest.

A Quorum Is Always Necessary

From the New York Commercial Advertiser. Miss Laura B. Farrow, nominated for congress by Socialists in Texas, says she will drive the grafters out of the nation's legislature, if elected. Perhaps she expects that congress cannot transact business without a quorum.