

The Historical Society of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre,
St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 4C4

Our mission and goal is to increase the knowledge and appreciation of the history of St. Catharines and area. The Society was founded in 1927.
Our Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society.

Our website is: <http://stcatharineshistory.wordpress.com>

June 2012 Newsletter - SPECIAL WAR OF 1812 EDITION

The Historical Society has designated the June 2012 issue of the Society Newsletter as the "SPECIAL WAR OF 1812 BICENTENNIAL ISSUE." Heritage organizations and bicentennial committees throughout Ontario and on the American side of the border are planning a variety of events during the bicentennial years, 2012 - 2014, to commemorate the war and, especially, to celebrate the 200 years of peace that have prevailed between Canada and the United States. It is appropriate that the Society should mark the beginning year of the Bicentennial with an extended article by our own intrepid local historian, Alun Hughes, focusing on one particular aspect of the Battle of Queenston Heights (October 13, 1812), the major battle of 1812 on the Niagara Frontier.

Meeting Reminder - Thursday, June 28, 2012 - 6:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum. A Celebration of William Hamilton Merritt's Birthday 219 years ago on July 3, 1793 - a brief ceremony will take place at the National Historic Plaque outside the museum's Canal-side entrance, followed by serving of birthday cake in the Burgoyne Room! At **7:30 p.m.** - John McKenty, an author from Perth, Ontario will tell us the story of the CCM and Welland Vale Manufacturing Companies. In the good old days St. Catharines' Welland Vale Works built bicycles And there may be one to see! As the Greater Circle Route passes by "Merritt's ditch" and many people use their bicycles on the trailwill any member ride their bike to the meeting? (note: we will not be meeting at the Merritt monument this year)

Our First Program of the New Season - Thursday, September 27, 2012 - 7:30 p.m. at the St. Catharines Museum. -Part #1 - Speaker: Roger Bradshaw - A photographic reminder of The War of 1812 - a 25 minute visual created by Roger that captures Niagara's involvement in the War.
Part # 2 - Speaker: **Des McConnell** - a long time member who has been involved in **military re-enactments** for many years will give a 25 minute presentation on re-enactments and display some interesting items he uses to do so, along with an update of what will be taking place at the upcoming Queenston Heights event. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Please Renew Your Membership Now!

For the membership year September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013

Membership Dues: Individual \$10.00; Family \$15.00

Make cheques payable to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines

Mail to: The Historical Society of St. Catharines
P.O. Box 25017, 221 Glendale Avenue, Pen Centre, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2T 4C4

SOCIETY NEWS

Welcome to Our New Members: Gary & Marianne deSalis, and Karin Barnes

Annual Meeting Minutes – will be published in the September Newsletter

2012 – 2013 Board List and Addresses

President: Elizabeth Finnie: 905-684-4416 - finnies@sympatico.ca
Past President: John Burtiak: 905-227-5120
Vice President: Dennis Gannon 905-682-6053 - gannond2002@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Christopher Loat: 905-685-6939 - christopher_loat@ridleycollege.com
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2012 – 2013 Program – the full program will be announced at the June meeting and will be published in the September Newsletter.

Non-Renewals – please note that members who do not renew by December 1, 2012 will be removed from the membership list at that time.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

NEWSLETTER NOTES

The Historical Society of St. Catharines Newsletter is published up to four times per year. The purpose is to inform the membership of issues pertaining to the Society and items of historical interest. Comments and queries should be directed to the Society's postal address. Opinions and comments expressed in the Newsletter are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Society. Subscription to the Newsletter is by paid membership only.

Submission Deadline for September 2012 Newsletter is August 1, 2012

Membership: Membership information will not be shared with any other group or business. As this is a general mailing, if you have already renewed your membership, please disregard this notice.

For your record: Renewed on: _____, 2012 - Cheque in the amount of: \$ _____

Remove the form below and return with your remittance

My/Our Membership Renewal for 2012-2013

I/we wish to renew my/our membership: **Individual:** \$10.00 - _____ - **Family:** \$15.00 - _____

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Provide e-mail if you wish to receive Society notices: _____

WHERE DID BROCK FALL?

The question in the title refers to Major General Sir Isaac Brock's death at the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812. At first sight there seems to be an obvious answer, for at the south or upper end of the village of Queenston stands an obelisk bearing the inscription, "Near this spot Major General Sir Isaac Brock ... fell on 13th October 1812 while advancing to repel the invading enemy."

However, the word "near" poses a problem. It implies that he was not shot at the site of the obelisk itself, but somewhere nearby. But if that is the case, how near is near, and in what direction? Why wasn't the obelisk placed in the correct spot when it was erected in 1860? Was the site inaccessible, was it on private land, or was it simply that the exact spot where Brock was killed was not known?



The Brock obelisk in Queenston

Brock's Death at the Heights

The Battle of Queenston Heights was fought just four months into the War of 1812. Only one major engagement had taken place previously, the capture of Detroit in August by a force led by Brock and Native leader Tecumseh. After that victory Brock hurried back to Niagara with the aim of launching an attack across the Niagara River, only to find a temporary armistice in effect. The Americans took advantage of this to bolster their forces, a process that eventually culminated, on October 13, in an invasion of Upper Canada.

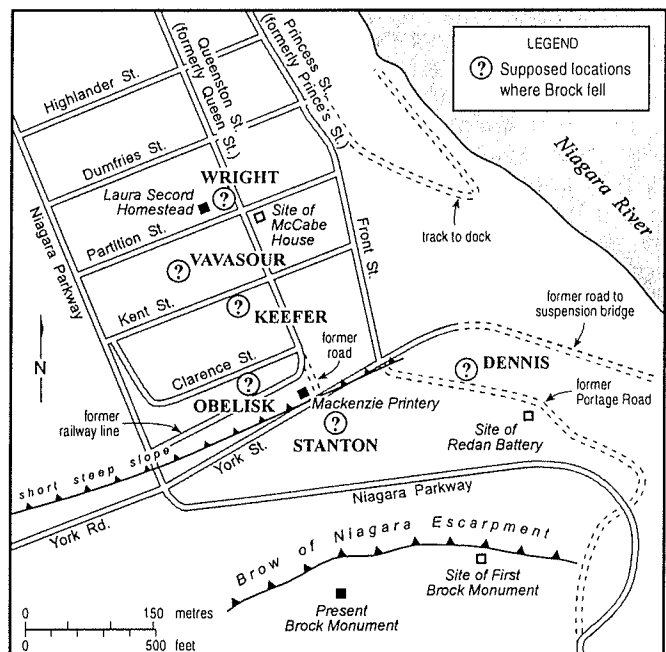
It began before dawn, when 13 boats, each carrying 30 men, crossed the river from Lewiston to Queenston, landing near the mouth of the Niagara Gorge. Brock was at Fort George at the time, and how he learned of the attack is not clear. Though he suspected that the assault was but a feint to distract attention from a major invasion planned for the Fort itself, he galloped to Queenston anyway, and reached the village at about sunrise.

A fierce firefight erupted after the Americans landed, accompanied by an artillery battle with

cannons firing from opposite banks. One of the British cannons, an 18-pounder, was located at the redan battery part way up the Niagara Escarpment. With his troops pinned down near the river, the American commander Lieutenant Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer directed a detachment headed by Captain John Wool to scale the steep gorge wall in order to attack the battery from above. The attempt was successful, and the British retreated to the village. Brock sent an order for reinforcements to Major General Sheaffe at Fort George, but rather than wait for them to arrive he decided to retake the battery immediately.

This was an unfortunate decision, for Brock would soon be shot and killed. But where exactly he was when he suffered the fatal wound has never been settled. Robert Malcomson, in his authoritative book about the battle, *A Very Brilliant Affair*, says little. Nor do the authors of two recent biographies of Brock, *The Astonishing General* by Wesley B. Turner, and *A Matter of Honour* by Jonathon Riley. All three imply that he was advancing up the slope towards the battery, but not much beyond that.

This article considers all the known evidence, and does so in reverse chronological order, starting with the 1860 debate about where to locate the obelisk. The map below shows present-day Queenston, marked with a number of the key sites mentioned in the article. The question marks denote six locations that have been suggested over time as possible sites where Brock met his death, and they appear also on images on subsequent pages.



Queenston as it is today

The Obelisk Debate

The obelisk was dedicated on September 18, 1860 by Albert, Prince of Wales, who at the time was on a tour of North America. The itinerary was jam-packed with travel and events, but on September 14 the Prince came to Niagara Falls for a weekend break. When the tour resumed on the 18th the first engagement was a ceremony honouring veterans of the War of 1812 at the Brock Monument on Queenston Heights. The Prince then descended the Escarpment to Queenston, and using a suitably engraved silver trowel, spread mortar on a stone base whereupon the obelisk was lowered into place.

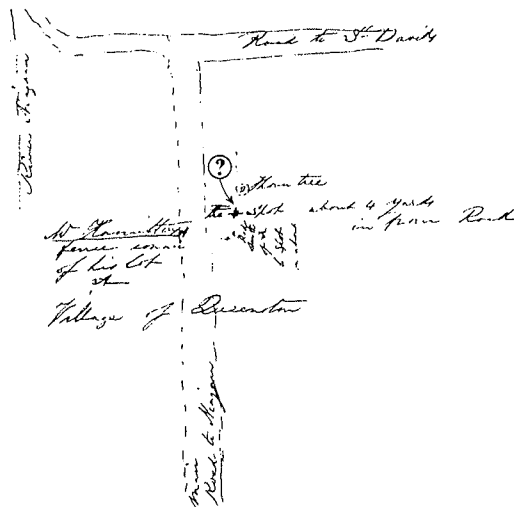
The first mention of any memorial at the site of Brock's death appeared on April 26, 1860 in the *St. Catharines Journal*. After referring to the Brock Monument, dedicated the previous year, as "one of the finest columns in the world," the paper went on to say, "nothing has as yet been done to indicate the precise spot on which the hero fell. It is proposed, we are glad to learn, to place a commemoration stone on the spot. — Would it not be well that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales should be requested to preside at the ceremonial, and the Militia of Upper Canada be invited to meet him, and witness it."

A committee was struck to select an architect and to determine the precise location of Brock's death. It is not known who all the members were, but the chair was probably Sir Allan MacNab of Dundurn Castle. He had chaired the committee responsible for erecting the Brock Monument, and gave the opening address at its unveiling in 1859. The architect was an easy choice — William Thomas, who had designed the Monument. But deciding where exactly Brock fell turned out to be a much greater challenge.

This is clear from the few documents that survive from the committee's deliberations, most of which are in the Niagara Historical Society Museum. The following extract from a letter written to MacNab by Thomas on August 9 illustrates the problem well: "I was over at Queenston yesterday with Mr. Worthington and ascertained the spot according to the best testimony we could obtain from Mr. Wynn, Mr. Brown and Mr. Wadsworth. I have made a sketch to show how they compare with the statements of Mr. Wright here. Mr Wright's opinion places the mon[ument] spot in the Road at X ... Mr. Wynn places it at C Mr. Brown at B and Mr. Wadsworth at A."

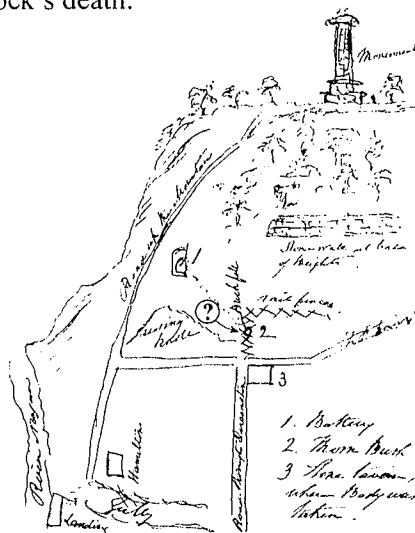
It was Thomas, apparently, who had the task of gathering evidence about that fateful spot. Having made no progress with prominent local people like Thomas Clark Street and 1812 veteran William Hamilton Merritt, he ended up stating a preference for Wright's spot X, "which is by far the best." One might suppose that this was because Wright claimed to have actually witnessed Brock's death (even hearing his "last groan"). But, no, it was because spot X was the only one of the four on public land.

Where was this spot? Thomas' original sketch of points A, B, C and X has not survived, but a second sketch he drew of spot X alone is in the Museum. (There is no name on the sketch, but the handwriting confirms that the author was Thomas.) The spot is shown alongside a "thorn tree," 4 yards west of Queen (now Queenston) Street and a rod (16.5 feet) south of "Mr. Hamilton's fence." The fence has long gone, but it is clear from Robert Hamilton's will — specifically a description of land left to his son Alexander — that the fence ran midway between Partition and Dumfries Streets. This would place spot X in front of the Laura Secord Homestead.



Detail from Thomas' sketch

A fifth possibility had arisen earlier when another 1812 veteran, Robert Stanton of Toronto, wrote to MacNab on July 28 enclosing a sketch "hastily made from memory." (This sketch too is unsigned, but again the authorship is evident from the handwriting.) Stanton said that Brock died alongside a "thorn bush" at the base of the Escarpment, just across York Street from a stone tavern (where the Mackenzie Printery is now). Significantly, this is where Robert Malcomson in 2006 brought a television crew that was making a documentary about Brock's death.



Stanton's sketch

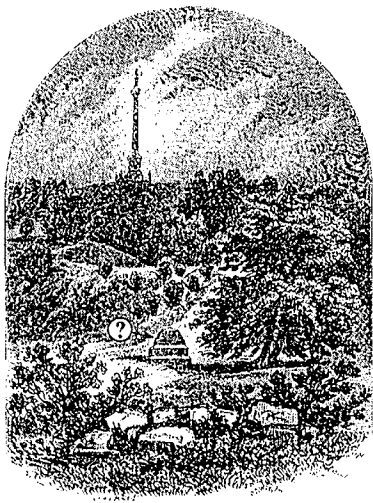
Note 3 on the sketch states that Brock's body was taken to the tavern, and in his letter to MacNab Stanton even claims to have seen it there. But this cannot be so, for Brock's body was carried to a stone house belonging to Patrick McCabe located diagonally across from the Laura Secord Homestead.

Deciding the Location

Thomas' letter to MacNab quoted above was written barely a month before the Prince was due to arrive at the Falls. Time was running out, and Thomas was becoming impatient. In the same letter he displays his frustration, "I strongly advise you to agree to have it [the obelisk] placed on the road at X and I will have it commenced at once and we can prepare it in time."

The very next day, on August 10, MacNab wrote to fellow committee member Colonel Daniel MacDougal, and made this startling admission, "I enclose you all the information I have been able to obtain — and I think you had better call a meeting of all who can furnish information worth having and determine on the spot — if you can not hit the Bull's Eye, come as near as possible — & we will all swear that's the identical spot." MacNab could not be at the meeting, but the others followed his orders and agreed on a location on village lot 32, which was privately owned by Gilbert McMicken. The chosen spot was also right alongside another thorn bush!

That fact comes from Benson Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, published in 1869. In 1860 he was in Niagara gathering information, and he later wrote, "On the day of my arrival at Queenston [August 17], a committee, appointed for the purpose, had decided on the exact spot where Brock fell A space sixty feet square within which was to be placed a memorial stone, had been staked out, and in the centre, the very spot, as the committee supposed, where the hero fell, was marked." That spot was "a little eastward of the 'aged thorn bush', which had become a tree twenty feet in height ... when I saw it."



Lossing's picture of the obelisk and the monument

The thorn bush (now long gone) appears at right in Lossing's picture, but the picture itself is in part a fake. The obelisk had not been erected when he was in Queenston, but he obtained a sketch of it from a stonecutter. In Lossing's own words, "After making a drawing on the spot, showing the old thorn-tree on the right, and the stately Monument on the Heights in the distance, I introduced, in proper place and proportions, the sketch of the memorial stone" He may have got the place right, but the proportions are another matter — the obelisk appears somewhat squatter in the picture than it actually is.

Not everyone agreed with the spot the committee had chosen for the obelisk. As Lossing said, "I was told that some old residents of the village declared that the place where Brock fell was westward of the thorn-tree, and at least twenty paces from the spot selected. James Cooper, a blacksmith, who was within six feet of Brock when he fell, said it was west of the thorn-tree; and Henry Stone, who lived in the stone house near the field declared that he saw the blood of Brock on rocks west of the tree."

The Keefer Map

There are two maps, both purporting to show where Brock fell, that the obelisk committee apparently did not see. One, dating from 1817, will be discussed later, and the other was drawn in 1860 by George Keefer Jr. of Thorold, right at the time of the Prince's visit.



Detail from the Keefer map

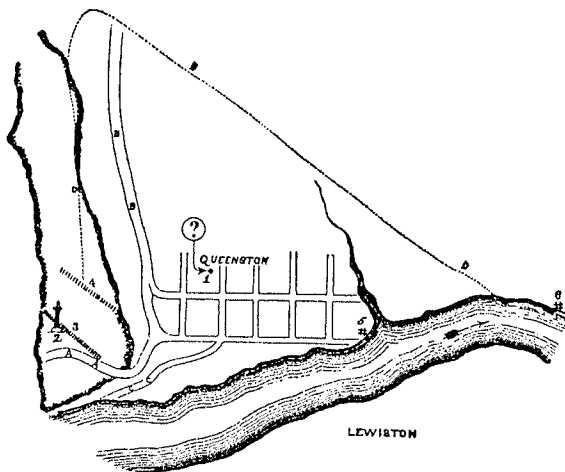
Keefer sent the map to William Hamilton Merritt on September 17, 1860, and in the accompanying letter he says that it is a copy of one originally drawn in about 1850 for Colonel James FitzGibbon (of Battle of Beavertams fame). Keefer knew that Merritt would be at the ceremonies at Queenston Heights and Queenston the following day, the 18th, and at the end of the letter he gives his reason for sending the map, "If this sketch will be of any

service to you tomorrow, to lay before His Royal Highness or any of the party accompanying him, you are quite welcome to it.”

FitzGibbon’s intention had been to present the map to the committee planning the new Brock Monument (the earlier one was destroyed by a terrorist act in 1840). One of the mandates of the committee apparently was “to ascertain the exact spot where Brock fell.” Keefer had accordingly discussed this with “some of the old inhabitants of that place,” and “the spot was pointed out to me near a plum tree.” The spot is shown on his map 120 feet west of Main (Queenston) Street and 60 feet south of what presumably is Kent Street.

The map also displays a line linking the site with the first Brock Monument, the remains of which were still there in 1850 when the original map was drawn. The line is labelled with a bearing of S43°E and a distance of 1348 feet, and when these are entered into *Google Earth* the site just south of Kent Street is confirmed. The bearing would have been easy for Keefer to measure with a compass, but the distance is another matter. The only way to measure distances at the time was by chain, and chaining that line would have been impossible, if only because of the slope of the Escarpment. He may simply have measured the distance from the map, and he may well have obtained the bearing the same way. However that may be, Keefer’s map shows an alternative death site in the same general area as Wright’s spot X, albeit two blocks removed.

Interestingly, the Keefer spot appears also on a map of “The Battle of Queenston” illustrating a serialized history of the War of 1812 by Gilbert Auchinleck, published in the *Anglo-American Magazine* in 1853. This implies that the spot was known to others besides Keefer and FitzGibbon.



Auchinleck's map

(Redrawn versions of Auchinleck’s map are included in *The Battle of Queenston Heights* by John Symons in 1859, and in H.R. Page’s *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Lincoln & Welland*, dated 1876.)

Travellers’ Accounts

In the decades following the War of 1812 many travellers visited Niagara and recorded their observations. It was apparently customary when they came to Queenston for a local resident to point out the spot where Brock fell. Some of the travellers gave a description of the location in their writings.

One early visitor was Richard Langslow, who came to the area in 1817. He speaks of “A tall pole like a flag-staff erected on the spot where Gen’l Brock fell; about 300 yards from the road on the right hand” Since he was travelling south this meant west of the road, but the distance of 300 yards only makes sense if he was heading up Front Street.

(This, incidentally, is not the only claim that the location was marked in some way, for in 1860 William Thomas reported Mr. Wadsworth as saying “that a stake was in for years showing the spot.”)

But there was no pole or stake in sight when John Goldie came through Queenston in 1819, for he reports, “Close to the Upper end of the Town the spot was pointed out to me where the Brave General Brock was killed — It is quite near to the road and is marked by a number of thorn bushes, which form a kind of circle — They were not however planted on that account, but have grown there long before that circumstance taking place”

The thorn bush theme is continued, if scaled down somewhat, by John Howison in 1821. He writes: “General Brock was killed close to the road that leads through Queenston village, and an aged thorn bush now marks the place where he fell, when the fatal ball entered his vitals.” He refers to the spot as “classic ground,” and speaks of the several times he sat beneath the bush after dark “when every light in the village was extinguished.”

John Duncan in 1823 also refers to a thorn bush: “At Queenston the battle was fought in which General Brock fell, and the inhabitants point out a thorn bush at the bottom of the heights, where it is said he received his mortal wound.”

However, three later writers make no mention of a thorn bush, and only add complications of their own. E.T. Coke in 1833: “The spot where he fell is near three poplar trees at the back of the village” Gideon Davison in 1834: “The spot on which Brock fell is pointed out to strangers. It was in a small field, since called Brock’s lot: and is reserved for the erection of a church at a future period.” J.W. Orr in 1842: “When struck, he was standing by a cherry tree, still pointed out in an orchard to the right, at the foot of the mountain-plain.”

No doubt some of these travellers saw the actual location where Brock fell, but their descriptions are vague and not much help in tying down the spot. However, they do suggest that it was at the upper

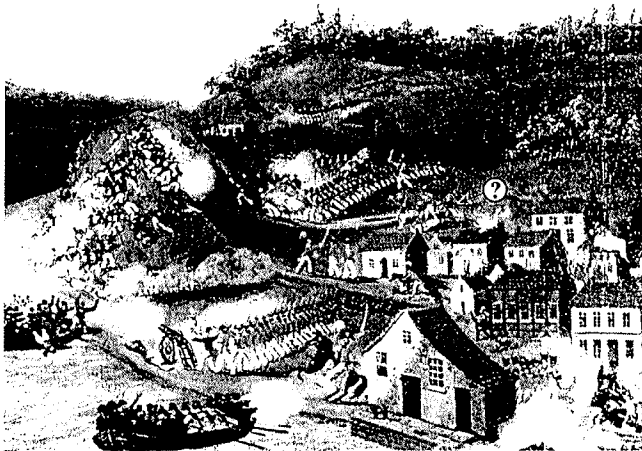
end of the village below the Escarpment, and (except possibly Langslow) not far from Queen Street.

Paintings and Engravings

The RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston possesses a magnificent oil painting of the Battle of Queenston Heights. It records several phases of the battle simultaneously — from the American boats crossing the Niagara River to the final British attack on the Heights that led to the enemy defeat. Among the scenes depicted are American troops climbing the gorge wall, cannons firing, buildings burning, fighting in the village, and several lines of soldiers on both sides of the river.

The painting also includes three depictions of Brock. One has him galloping through the village, and another portrays him defiantly waving a sword atop a rearing horse at the river's edge. The third, however, shows him expiring. Brock himself is lying on his back, a soldier is kneeling beside him, and other soldiers stand alongside. The location is on the Portage Road back of the village (though there's no sign of a thorn bush nearby).

On the map of Queenston on the first page of this article the spot in question is labelled Dennis, because the painting is usually attributed to Major James Dennis, who was present at the battle. A Captain at the time, Dennis commanded the 49th Grenadier Company, and fought heroically even after he was wounded in action. Indeed, it was following the battle that he was promoted to Major.



Detail from the Dennis painting

Despite the attribution, the artist responsible for the painting is uncertain, for Dennis is not known to have produced any other paintings during his lifetime. It is too sophisticated to have been done as a once-only work or by an amateur, so it was almost certainly painted by another artist. There is, however, solid evidence that Dennis contributed in some way to its creation.

At least two engravings were based on the painting later in the century. The first, a hand-coloured

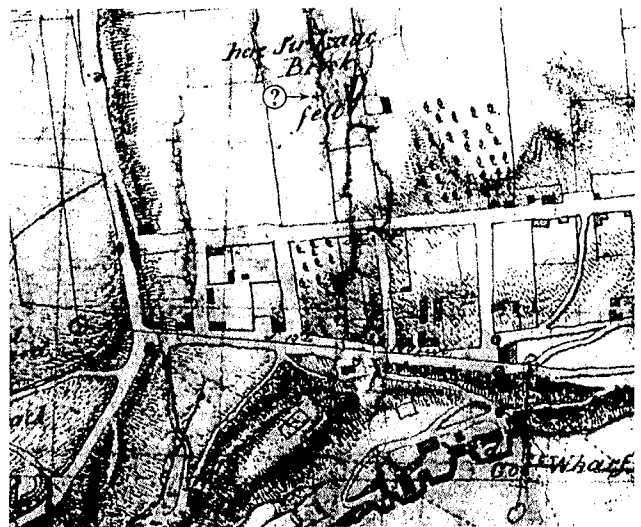
aquatint, was produced by renowned English engraver Thomas Sutherland in 1836 for I.W. Laird's *Martial Achievements*, published in London. The second, a hand-coloured lithograph, was printed by the Toronto lithography firm of Grant, Barfoot & Co. (active 1880-85). Both engravings are labelled "Drawn by Major Dennis," and the second also says, "Reproduced from an old engraving dated April 12th 1816" (whether or not this is a misprint for 1836 is unknown). However, there seems little doubt that the oil painting at RiverBrink is based on a drawing by Dennis.

(Two versions of the Sutherland aquatint are at RiverBrink and one version of the lithograph is at the Niagara Historical Society Museum. They are not exact copies of the painting — for example, they do not show Brock on horseback. In addition, all three versions contain serious errors in the colouring of soldiers' uniforms — both RiverBrink versions have the dying Brock wearing American blue, and one of them has all the soldiers surrounding him dressed in blue also!)

There are also other depictions of Brock's death, among them John David Kelly's famous oil painting of 1896, but since Kelly wasn't in the battle what it reveals must be taken with a grain of salt.

The Vavasour Map

In 1817 Captain Henry Vavasour of the Royal Engineers produced a detailed large-scale map of Queenston and the surrounding area. Entitled "A Plan of the Position of Queenston," it is clearly based on a formal survey, and contains such information as roads, buildings, barracks, field boundaries, woods, drainage and relief features.



Detail from the Vavasour map

It also shows a point marked by a cross and labelled "here Sir Isaac Brock fell." The spot in question is roughly 125 yards west of Queen Street between Kent and Partition Streets, though as can be seen from the map itself, the relevant sections of the

latter two streets did not exist in 1817. (The same spot is also marked on a military map of Queenston drawn in 1851, though the author is unknown.) Vavasour, a professional military surveyor, drew his map only five years after Brock met his death, and it must therefore be taken seriously.

The Vavasour map brings to six the number of possible death sites that can be identified — three north of the obelisk (Wright, Keefer and Vavasour), two to the south (Stanton and Dennis), and, of course, at the obelisk itself. All six are marked on the map of Queenston on the first page.

Smith and *The Bee*

If the Vavasour map has to be taken seriously because it was drawn just five years after Brock's death, then presumably a letter written only five days after the fateful event must count for even more. On October 18, 1812, John Smith, an Adjutant with the 41st Regiment, wrote a very long letter (almost 4000 words) to Lieutenant Colonel Henry Procter, also of the 41st, describing the Battle of Queenston Heights.

What he says about Brock's death is revealing: "The Enemy having got possession of all the strong positions the Genl retreated to the Village where he rallied some of the 49th Regt and Militia in a small field at the end of Mr. Miller's Tavern, and was going to attack the Enemy when he received a musket ball below his breast that lodged near his back bone, which put an end to his existence"

Does this mean that Brock died in a field back of Miller's Tavern? Not necessarily, for the word "going" could mean that he was already on his way to confront the enemy. But a report on the battle that appeared in a Niagara newspaper, *The Bee*, just six days later on October 24, removes any doubt: "It was a small field near to the tavern formerly occupied by one Miller, that General Brock received his mortal wound, supposed to have been a musquet [sic] shot from near the battery, and which entered below his breast and lodged near his back bone."

So, where was Miller's Tavern? Neither Smith nor *The Bee* give any clue as to its location, nor is there any record of a tavern at Queenston owned or operated by anyone named Miller. There may have been a tavern or two on Front Street at its intersection with Partition Street, but no one states that Brock was shot near one of them. Lieutenant Samuel Jarvis, in a letter to an unknown recipient dated October 15, 1812, mentions troops rallying at "Carrols Tavern," which may be the tavern once operated by Miller, but where this was is unknown. And of course, there may have been a tavern at the site of the Mackenzie Printery, as claimed by Stanton in 1860, but there is no proof of this either.

Since Miller's Tavern was mentioned by two separate writers within 11 days of the battle, one would think that it constitutes a key piece of

evidence as to where Brock fell. But that may not be the case, because neither Smith nor the author of the article in *The Bee* were at the Battle of Queenston Heights. Both reported what somebody told them, and the similarities in what they say suggests it was the same source. It's not just their descriptions of the spot where Brock was killed either; it is also what they say were Brock's last words.

The consensus nowadays is that Brock did not utter a word before he breathed his last, but in the days after his death there was much speculation as to what his dying words might have been. On October 14 Lieutenant George Ridout wrote to his father that Brock's final words were, "Push on the Brave York Volunteers," and three days later *The York Gazette* repeated the same. But Captain John Glegg, writing the day after the battle to Brock's brother, claimed that Brock's last words were: "My fall must not be noticed or impede my brave companions from advancing to victory." Later writers even claim that he added a message to his sister.

In his letter to Procter, Smith said that "he died like a hero, for as he fell he said 'never mind me my Boys push on'" What *The Bee* said is uncertain, for the only surviving copy known (at Brock University) is damaged. But when one compares this to earlier transcriptions, the relevant sentence seems to say, "when the fatal ball was received, his exclamation was 'push on, my Boys, never mind me'" Despite the damage to the university copy, there's no doubt that *The Bee* reported something very similar to Smith.

Smith and *The Bee* almost certainly based their accounts of Brock's final moments on the same source, which means that only one person, not two, brought up Miller's Tavern. But that in itself is no reason to discount what may be a crucial piece of evidence as to where Brock fell.

Jarvis' Account

Several people claim to have been near Brock when he died, or at least close enough that they were able to identify the fatal spot, but only one person wrote about the experience at any length. This was George S. Jarvis, a 15-year-old volunteer with the 49th Regiment. This, in part, is what Jarvis said:

"On arriving at the foot of the mountain, where the road diverges to St. David's, General Brock dismounted, and, waving his sword, climbed over a high stone wall, followed by the troops; placing himself at the head of the light company of the 49th, he led the way up the mountain at double quick time, in the very teeth of a sharp fire from the enemy's riflemen — and, ere long, he was singled out by one of them who coming forward, took deliberate aim, and fired; several of the men noticed the action, and fired — but too late — and our gallant General fell on his left side, within a few feet of where I stood.

Running up to him, I enquired, 'Are you much hurt, sir?' He placed his hand on his breast, but made no reply — and slowly sunk down."

Jarvis does not specify where exactly Brock was shot, but most writers conclude that he meant south of (or above) York Street, the road that leads to St. David's. This would seem to narrow down the choices to Stanton or Dennis, except for one detail — Jarvis' account of his experience first appeared 40 years later, in 1853, in Auchinleck's serialized history of the War of 1812.

Auchinleck went to considerable lengths to obtain an accurate picture of the Battle of Queenston Heights. As he says, "We have been most diligent in endeavouring to arrive at ... a correct version of the events of 13th October, and for that purpose have had many interviews with veterans in different parts of the country who were present on that occasion." But then he states that "it has been no easy task to reconcile all the discrepancies" in "the multiplicity of the accounts all differing from each other." Significantly perhaps, Jarvis' version of Brock's death is the only one quoted by Auchinleck, and he adds, "So far, Mr. G.S. Jarvis' account agrees with those received from Captain Crooks, Colonel Clark, Colonel Kerby, and Captain John McMeekin — all of whom were present on this occasion."

One can't help wondering, however, how well Jarvis recalled what happened 40 years earlier and also to what extent he might have embellished his account to make it more readable. Consider, for example, what he said about the start of the advance towards the battery: "[Brock] was loudly cheered as he cried, 'Follow me, Boys!' and led us at a pretty smart trot towards the mountain; checking his horse to a walk, he said, 'Take breath, Boys! we shall want it in a few minutes!' another cheer was the hearty response both from regulars and militia." Is there not a hint of colourful exaggeration here?

Discussion

Malcomson and Riley, two of the three historians referenced earlier, accept what Jarvis implied was the spot where Brock fell, in other words south of York Street (Malcomson also reproduces Vavasour's map, but makes no comment about the inconsistency). The third historian, Turner, is more circumspect.

But there remains one inconvenient fact: when the obelisk committee was seeking information regarding the spot in 1860, only one person (Stanton) said it was south of York Street. Three people (Wright, Keefer and Vavasour) said it was north of York Street. And when the location for the obelisk was eventually chosen, it was north of York Street also. Furthermore, three travellers (Langslow, Goldie and Howison) imply the same thing, for they all refer to a site alongside the main road (Queen Street) through the village, and at the time of the battle this ended at York Street.

(The committee apparently did not consult Jarvis, who was then a County Judge in Cornwall, which is strange given that its members would surely have been aware of his quoted report in Auchinleck. They could not check with Dennis, for he had died in England in 1855. But they likely knew nothing about the painting attributed to Dennis anyway. Samuel E. Weir, whose home is now the RiverBrink Art Museum, purchased the painting at an auction in London, England in 1967. It apparently came from "a collection of a lady," but its provenance trail before then is unknown.)

We are left with six possible locations where Brock was shot that can be identified: the site of the obelisk itself, two locations to the south, and three to the north. How do we choose between them? To answer this question we need to consider four issues.

Riley brings up the first in his biography of Brock — the maximum range of muskets and rifles (100 and 200 yards respectively). This would serve to narrow down the location if the shooter was anywhere near the battery. But when the Americans took the battery the British retreated to the village, and it would be surprising if the enemy did not venture down the slope (after all, Captain Wool was accompanied by well over 100 soldiers).

A second issue is the slope itself. Jarvis speaks of Brock leading his troops "up the mountain," almost as though they were climbing the steepest part of the Escarpment. But the gradient above York Street, leading east towards the battery, is very gentle. Indeed the slope of Queen Street between Dumfries and Kent Streets, where the Wright, Vavasour and Keefer spots are located, is if anything steeper.

Separating the two gently-sloping areas, however, is a short, steep slope coinciding roughly with York Street. (Since 1812 it has been modified somewhat by the widening of the road, but is still very evident.) Perhaps this is what Jarvis meant when he referred to "the mountain." It seems reasonable to assume also that some of Wool's party advanced this far after taking the battery. Despite the possible lack of cover, the abrupt slope would be a vantage point to repulse any British counterattack.

The third issue is the location of the McCabe House, to which Brock's body was taken after he was shot. This would seem to be an argument against the Dennis and Stanton spots, given their distance to the house and the steep slope along York Street. It has to be said, however, that no matter where Brock fell, his men would surely have carried his body any distance necessary to hide him in a secure location out of sight of the enemy.

But this raises the question, if Brock did indeed fall south of York Street was there no suitable building closer than the McCabe House? The earliest map of Queenston is Vavasour's, drawn in 1817, and this depicts only a scattering of buildings in

the village. But the map also shows a large building right at the intersection of Queen and York Streets (now occupied by the Mackenzie Printery). Had a building existed here in 1812 it would have been a definite alternative to the McCabe House. Of course, Stanton claimed there was a tavern at this location at the time of the battle, which may or may not be so. There is no way, however, that the imposing two-storey stone house that became the Mackenzie Printery was there, or it would surely have featured prominently in accounts of the battle.



The restored Mackenzie Printery

(Who built the original house and when, is still uncertain. However, there is evidence to suggest that it was erected by Queenston merchant Thomas Dickson, and that the building shown on Vavasour's map is indeed the house, which dates it prior to 1817. The building is named for William Lyon Mackenzie, who published the *Colonial Advocate* there in 1824. It was a ruin by the turn of the century, and was restored in 1938.)

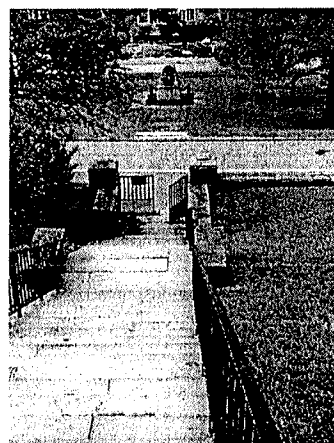
There remains one more issue to discuss, and that is the route that Brock took through the village on his final charge towards the battery. Most writers assume Queen Street, which is probably correct. It was, after all, the main road connecting Queenston to Fort George, and in 1812 Queen Street ran south all the way to York Street. (Today, as shown on the map on the first page, it curves westward at the Mackenzie Printery along the line of a former railway.)

But if Brock followed Queen Street where did he encounter the stone wall mentioned by Jarvis? Many writers assume that this was beyond York Street. Stanton's sketch shows a stone wall in this area, but it is too far up the Escarpment, possibly marking the limit of the military reserve. Also, where might the wall have been if Brock didn't get as far as York Street? Vavasour's map shows several field boundaries west of Queen Street, some of which could have been built of stone. Had Brock decided to veer to the right of the road for some reason (Lieutenant John Beverley Robinson speaks of him "proceeding up the right of the mountain" in a letter to an unknown recipient on October 14), he might have crossed one of these. Or, perhaps Brock never climbed over a stone wall in the first place.

We need to be cautious about "eye witness" accounts of Brock's death, especially when they come many years after the event. Take, for example, what militiaman Joseph Birnie is quoted as saying in "*Tales of the War — Queenston Heights*," an article written by John H. Land for the Wentworth Historical Society in 1915. Birnie says that Brock was still riding his horse when he was shot, he himself caught Brock when he fell to the ground, and a surgeon was called but arrived too late. Birnie also claims that Brock was killed after his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Colonel John MacDonell, was shot, which, simply, is a major error.

Conclusion

Despite all the evidence available — the pole, the stake, the various thorn bushes, the plum tree, the cherry tree, the poplars, the stone wall, Brock's lot and Miller's Tavern, not to mention everything that has been written over the years and the many maps and sketches that have been drawn — it is still not possible to say with absolute certainty where Brock fell.



The obelisk from York Street today

When all is said and done, however, there is no doubt that the obelisk is in a plausible location. If the Americans did indeed proceed down to York Street after capturing the battery, one can easily imagine an enemy soldier perched on the brow of the slope, taking aim, firing and killing Brock exactly at the site of the obelisk. So, maybe the obelisk committee, despite its last-minute panic in 1860, got it right after all (that is, give or take a few yards, for we should not ignore the divergent remarks of the "old residents" quoted by Lossing).

Principal Sources: (in addition to those cited in the text): Cruikshank, *Documentary History of the Campaign upon the Niagara Frontier*; Wood, *Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812*; Hunter, "The Probated Wills of Men Prominent in the Public Affairs of Early Upper Canada," in *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*; Merritt, "Early Inns and Taverns" in *The Capital Years*; St. Denis, "The House where General Brock Died?" in *Journal of the Society for Historical Research*; *Malcomson Fonds*, Brock University; *Merritt Papers*; numerous books and articles about the Battle, the War, Brock and Queenston, ranging from Davison and Williams (1815) to Porteous (2011); Registry Office records; maps, airphotos and field observations.

Credits: map and layout (Loris Gasparotto); editing (John Burniak).

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