

DETROIT, QUEENSTON, MIAMI, AND NIAGARA

The 41st had arrived in Canada in 1799. Peace reigned with the United States until 1812 when Napoleon was successful in egging on the Americans to attack the British in Canada.

The war was fought by a small force of British regular troops, supported by Canadian Militia, over a period of two years. The line of defence of Canada was the great lakes and the rivers. This line stretching for great distances was the scene of most of the actions. Some of the actions were fought amidst the beauty of a Canadian summer, whilst others were fought in the ice and snow of the winter.

When the war started there were two main American threats, one on the Niagara front and the other on the Detroit River away to the west. General Brock determined to deal with the one to the flank first. He himself left the Niagara front with a re-enforcement for the 250 men of the 41st who were then (with some Militia and Indians) watching the Fort at Detroit from the Canadian side of the River Detroit. The General decided on an immediate attack on the Fort. At midnight on 15th August 1812 our force crossed the river undiscovered. As morning came our little force moved to the attack, but no reply came from the Fort. As the British came closer a white flag was run up and Detroit Fort was surrendered without firing a shot. It was a bloodless victory but an important one at that time.

This menace disposed of, Brock hurried back to the Niagara frontier. There across the river another American force was preparing to invade Canada. On the night 12th/13th October 1812 a considerable American force embarked to cross the river to seize Queenston. Though meant as a surprise attack, the secret had become known to Brock, but even then the force available to meet it was small. There then began a struggle between the 49th Foot (later to become 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment) and the Americans who were attempting to storm the heights from the river. In these efforts Brock was killed but not before he had sent a message for 380 of the 41st and some Militia and Indians to march to the battle. This force arrived when the Americans were not in a good position. So the re-enforcements were ordered to attack at once, which they did with complete success, driving the Americans back into the river. This closed the main campaign for this year.

The next year, 1813, the 41st on the Detroit frontier had plenty of hard fighting both in cold and heat. Most of this was up the Miami river which runs south-west out of Lake Erie. There were many actions. The one of which the Honour 'Miami' was granted was fought on April 23rd, 1813. The 41st was by then worn out with fighting, lack of provisions and ammunition, so that when the tide of war turned in favour of the Americans, both on land and on the Lake, a retirement from the Detroit frontier was necessary. This ended in disaster, and what was left of the 41st struggled back to the Niagara front.

By this time a second battalion of the 41st had arrived in Canada and carried on in place of the parent battalion in the campaign of 1814 on the Niagara frontier. In December, 1813, Fort Niagara had been captured from the Americans by a bit of bluff. 1814 was to see the 41st Light Company distinguish itself at the battle of Lundy's Lane and the flank companies at the assault on Fort Erie. By this time the Peninsular War was over and seasoned veterans from Wellington's army were on the way to take over the burden.

This war is of great importance as its result was undoubtedly to save Canada for the Empire. Four Honours were won by the 41st in this war, two of which 'Detroit' and 'Miami,' are shared with no other regiment in the British Army.