

# Calories and Culture

## Food, Drink, and the British Army in Early Nineteenth Century Upper Canada

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Résumé de l'article

*Nous allons analyser ce que les soldats britanniques du Haut-Canada du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle consommaient en temps de paix et en temps de guerre, et comment la nourriture et les boissons influèrent sur les relations sociales entre les soldats, les officiers et les autochtones. La consommation, d'une part, consiste à obtenir suffisamment d'énergie pour survivre, mais d'autre part, elle a également une signification et peut soit lier, soit rompre les relations sociales. Dans cet essai, j'examine à la fois les calories et la culture et le lien intrinsèque qui les unit. La première section traite des calories, c'est-à-dire des sources à partir desquelles les soldats se procuraient de la nourriture au-delà de leurs rations quotidiennes: la pêche, l'agriculture et, parfois, la chasse. Parmi les sources mentionnées précédemment, la pêche et la chasse divisaient particulièrement les soldats des officiers. La disponibilité des produits consommables, je suppose, dépendait de la classe sociale et de la connaissance de l'environnement. Ensuite, je décris les difficultés de la chasse et de la pêche en temps de guerre, qui ont à la fois aidé et empêché les soldats de se procurer de la nourriture. Dans la deuxième section, je me penche sur la culture: la nourriture et la boisson, ainsi que les rituels entourant la consommation et les lieux de consommation, ont eu un impact positif et négatif sur les relations sociales humaines au sein de l'armée britannique et avec les peuples autochtones.*

# Calories and Culture

## Food, Drink, and the British Army in Early Nineteenth Century Upper Canada

by Jake Breadman

Scotland: highlands to the north, sea to the east and west, and a cattle slaughterhouse to the south.<sup>1</sup> From here, and other distant parts of Great Britain, cattle were driven sixteen to nineteen kilometres a day in uplands, and sometimes twenty-four kilometres a day in flat country.<sup>2</sup> The journey was arduous for these bustling bovine, and so they were grazed near London to regain the weight they lost on their odyssey.<sup>3</sup> Once fattened up, the beasts were slaughtered, packed into casks of salt brine at Deptford's victualling yard, and sent to the hinterlands of the British Empire, like Upper Canada.<sup>4</sup> Cattle, in a way, served the Empire, albeit much less voluntarily

than the soldiers who consumed them, but was their service enough? This essay analyzes what British soldiers in early-nineteenth century Upper Canada consumed in both peace and wartime, and how food and drink impacted human social relations between soldiers, officers, and Indigenous people.<sup>5</sup> Consumption, for one, is about getting enough energy to survive, but it also has meaning and can either bind or break social relations. In this essay, I look at both calories and culture and the intrinsic connection between them. I begin with a brief outline of the historiographical gaps this paper fills. The first section looks at calories, being sources from which soldiers procured

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<sup>1</sup> I am primarily indebted to Alan MacEachern for reading and reviewing this paper multiple times. I am also grateful to numerous other scholars for reading this paper and providing suggestions, particularly an anonymous reviewer with *Ontario History*, Jesse Abbott, Scott Berthelette, Emma C. Biancaniello, Kaitlyn N. Carter, Renée Girard, Eamonn O'Keeffe, and Tory Tronrud.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793-1815: War, the British Navy, and the Contractor State* (London: Boydell Press, 2010), 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>5</sup> A note on terminology: soldiers, or "enlisted men," are those from the rank of private to sergeant major. Non-commissioned officers, which includes any soldier from the rank of lance corporal to sergeant major, are also counted as soldiers. Officers, also known as "commissioned officers," includes anyone from the rank of ensign and above.

## *Abstract*

*This article analyzes what British soldiers in early-nineteenth century Upper Canada consumed in both peace and wartime, and how food and drink impacted human social relations between soldiers, officers, and Indigenous people. Consumption is about getting enough energy to survive, but it can also bind or break social relations. Here, both calories and culture, and the intrinsic connection between them, are analyzed. The first section looks at the calories which soldiers procured from food beyond their daily rations: fishing, agriculture and, sometimes, hunting and purchase. Out of these, fishing and hunting particularly divided enlisted men and officers. The availability of consumables, though, depended on class and environmental knowledge. Then the difficulties of hunting and fishing in wartime are outlined. Section two turns to culture: food and drink, and the rituals and settings surrounding consumption, positively and negatively impacted human social relations within the British army and with Indigenous people.*

**Résumé:** Nous allons analyser ce que les soldats britanniques du Haut-Canada du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle consommaient en temps de paix et en temps de guerre, et comment la nourriture et les boissons influèrent sur les relations sociales entre les soldats, les officiers et les autochtones. La consommation, d'une part, consiste à obtenir suffisamment d'énergie pour survivre, mais d'autre part, elle a également une signification et peut soit lier, soit rompre les relations sociales. Dans cet essai, j'examine à la fois les calories et la culture et le lien intrinsèque qui les unit. La première section traite des calories, c'est-à-dire des sources à partir desquelles les soldats se procuraient de la nourriture au-delà de leurs rations quotidiennes: la pêche, l'agriculture et, parfois, la chasse. Parmi les sources mentionnées précédemment, la pêche et la chasse divisaient particulièrement les soldats des officiers. La disponibilité des produits consommables, je suppose, dépendait de la classe sociale et de la connaissance de l'environnement. Ensuite, je décris les difficultés de la chasse et de la pêche en temps de guerre, qui ont à la fois aidé et empêché les soldats de se procurer de la nourriture. Dans la deuxième section, je me penche sur la culture: la nourriture et la boisson, ainsi que les rituels entourant la consommation et les lieux de consommation, ont eu un impact positif et négatif sur les relations sociales humaines au sein de l'armée britannique et avec les peuples autochtones.

food beyond their daily rations: fishing, agriculture and, sometimes, hunting and purchase. Of all the aforementioned food sources, fishing and hunting par-

ticularly divided enlisted men and officers. The availability of consumables, I posit, depended on class and environmental knowledge. Following this, I outline the difficulties of hunting and fishing in wartime, which generally hindered soldiers from procuring food. In section two, I turn to culture: food and drink, and the rituals and settings surrounding consumption, positively and negatively impacted human social relations within the British army and with Indigenous people. I conclude by suggesting avenues for future research.

There are no environmental histories solely on the British army in Upper Canada. George Sheppard's book *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, Chapter 5: "A Grand Attack on the Onions': Provisions and Plundering" focuses particularly on wartime provision

plundering by British soldiers, which I largely avoid discussing because it is extensively covered.<sup>6</sup> This essay was methodologically inspired by Joseph Miller's

<sup>6</sup> George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 101-131.

recent environmental history of the War of 1812, which focuses mostly on the American army during the War of 1812.<sup>7</sup> I was also inspired by Gareth Newfield's report for Parks Canada on the "Culinary History of Early Niagara," which is well-researched and abundant with relevant primary source excerpts, but provides little analysis beyond outlining the types of food available to soldiers, officers, and civilians in Niagara.<sup>8</sup> Renée N. Lafferty's article on drink and soldiering in Niagara during the War of 1812 has been immensely valuable to my section on drinking and the British army in Upper Canada.<sup>9</sup> While we use some of the same sources, I have opted to use solely British sources from both prior to, during, and just after the War of 1812.

It is worth noting before proceeding further that references to the abundance of food in Upper Canada may have been exaggerated by travelogue writers and British officers to encourage immigration or an added military presence in the colony. However, as will be seen, there are multiple different types of literary, visual, and archaeological evidence which highlights the diversity of food available to soldiers and officers that cannot be discounted as purely exaggeration.

The placement of British forts and garrisons along the St. Lawrence

River, Niagara River, and the Great Lakes meant that fish were an abundant, additional food source that diversified soldiers' rations and officers' leisure. While traversing Upper Canada from 1791 to 1792, Patrick Campbell noted the affluence of fish available for consumption along the Niagara River:

I crossed the [Niagara] river to the north side to see the fishing, and saw 1008 caught at one hawl [sic] of a Seine net, mostly what is called here White Fish, and a few Herrings; the former weighs at an average above two pounds, the latter has the exact shape, scales, and colour of our Herring on the coast of Scotland, but is considerably larger and fatter in appearance... I saw several other kinds caught here, particularly the Sturgeon... many [sturgeon] weigh from thirty to forty pounds each... The fishing here continues from the middle of October to the middle of May, and I have been told that 6000 have been caught in a day. This is of great benefit to the troops and inhabitants, who have stated days in the week to fish, during the season.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that Campbell, on one random day, saw thousands of fish caught highlights that not only was this a common experience along the Niagara River, but also that these great hauls were beneficial to soldiers in Niagara. Fishing continued all throughout the winter months, as noted by Campbell, which

<sup>7</sup> See Miller's bibliography, for example: Joseph Miller, "'The Men Were Sick of the Place': Soldier Illness and Environment in the War of 1812," PhD Dissertation, (University of Maine, 2020), 220-34.

<sup>8</sup> Gareth Newfield, "Culinary History of Early Niagara," Report, (Parks Canada, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Renée N. Lafferty, "'The Vice of a Cold Climate': Drink and Soldiering on Niagara's Wartime Frontier (1812-14)," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 27:1 (2013): 5-36.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Campbell, *Travels in the interior inhabited parts of North America, in the years 1791 and 1792* (Edinburgh: John Guthrie, 1793), 169-70.

helped sustain garrisons in months when lakes and rivers froze and prevented rations from promptly reaching garrisons. Similarly, Elizabeth Simcoe, the wife of Revolutionary War veteran and Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe, remarked how the “5th Regt. have caught 100 sturgeon and 600 whitefish in a day in nets.”<sup>11</sup> Shortly after this instance, Simcoe noted how “St. Denis, of the 5th, caught yesterday, at Niagara, 500 whitefish and 40 sturgeon; this is common sturgeon, one nearly 6 ft. long.”<sup>12</sup> These passages imply how often soldiers fished, which undoubtedly served to supplement their rations. On the eve of the War of 1812, Private Shadrach Byfield of the 41st Regiment of Foot recalled a harrowing fishing incident on the Niagara River in which he almost died:

Soon after my recovery, as we were on a fishing party, I was employed in holding one end of the net, and with the violence of the wind and the waves I was pulled into the water, from the ice on which I was standing, and came in contact with the boat, and was almost squeezed to death between the boat and the ice.<sup>13</sup>

Edward Walsh’s watercolours from 1803-1805 shows officers, indicated

by their uniforms, fishing at Fort Erie, Chippawa, and, possibly, Fort St. Joseph. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3) It seems, then, that fishing was used by both soldiers and officers, although likely for leisure by the latter. Fishing persisted in war-time Kingston according to Lieutenant John Le Couteur of the 104th Regiment of Foot: “I took my Canoe and went up the lake to fish. I caught seventy-nine – Bass[.]”<sup>14</sup> Soldiers’ reliance on fish in Upper Canada is reinforced by osteoarchaeological studies of mass graves from the War of 1812. In one grave, two soldiers interpreted as British regulars by Emery et al. “deviated from the typical Upper Canadian diet by including freshwater fish with other high-protein foods, such as salt pork and beef.”<sup>15</sup> Royal Engineers such as Lieutenant George Thomas Landmann sometimes used technological inventiveness to make fishing almost effortless:

[W]e secured a regular supply by throwing all those fish that had been caught by the hook through the lip into a large *bateau* sunk in the water, where it was only deep enough to rise outside to within ten inches of the gunwale; several holes were bored in the bows and stern, to secure a run of water through it; and in this way we soon collected half a hundred

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, *The Diary of Mrs. John Graves Simcoe*, ed. by J. Ross Robertson (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 139.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>13</sup> Shadrach Byfield, *A Narrative of a Light Company Soldier’s Service, in the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot, During the Late American War; Together With Some Adventures Amongst the Indian Tribes from 1812 to 1814* (Bradford: John Bubb, 1840), 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> John Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days: The War of 1812 Journal of Lieutenant John Le Couteur, 104<sup>th</sup> Foot*, ed. by Donald Graves (Montreal: Robin Brass Studio, 2012), 226.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew V. Emery et al., “Exploring Dietary Variability in a War of 1812 Skeletal Collection from Stoney Creek, Ontario, Using Stable Carbon and Nitrogen Isotopes,” *Historical Archaeology* 49:4 (2015), 65.



of very fine perch, which were fed, and they fattened very rapidly. Thus, as often as we wanted fish in a hurry, we could be supplied by putting in a small landing net.<sup>16</sup>

Whether Landmann and his brother officers shared their bountiful catch with the enlisted men, or allowed them to use their contraption, is unclear.

How nutritionally beneficial were fish to soldiers? As the above excerpts indicate, whitefish, ranging from 30-65 cm, were the most common catch in the Great Lakes.<sup>17</sup> Per 100 g, a normal serving of food in 2021, baked or boiled, whitefish provided soldiers with an additional 133 calories, 22.5 g of protein, and 4.3 g of fat.<sup>18</sup> Bass is of similar nutritional value to whitefish but is somewhat smaller: 146 calories, 24 g of protein, 4.5 g of fat, and typically 20-30 cm.<sup>19</sup> Sturgeon were of similar nutritional value to whitefish and bass but were significantly larger. Sturgeon commonly range from 3-5 feet (and, as Simcoe noted, 6 feet!) and 100 g provided soldiers with 135 calories, 20.5 g of protein, and 5 g of fat.<sup>20</sup> The sheer size of the sturgeon would have

provided soldiers with a multi-day feast. Per 100 g, a conservative estimate, all the aforementioned fish provided soldiers with an additional 135 to 145 calories in addition to the 2700 calories from their daily rations. Given the abundance and monumental size of sturgeon, as well as the small size of military garrisons in pre-War Upper Canada, soldiers may well have eaten 200-300 g of fish per meal, granting soldiers an additional 270-405 calories.<sup>21</sup>

Fishing could also be an important social marker, and reveals much about the attitudes some British officers held towards enlisted men. John McEwan, born at Niagara in 1811, recalled how “[o]n the east side of Fort [George] there was a fine fish pond for the officers of the regiment. It was close to the Fort built of stone, a spring of clear water supplied it, so clear that the fish could plainly be seen.”<sup>22</sup> The existence of a separate fish pond for officers suggests, for one, that soldiers fished a lot, so much that officers felt the need to create an exclusive pond for themselves to avoid fraternizing with

<sup>16</sup> George Thomas Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections of Colonel Landmann, Late of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Vol. II* (London: Colburn & Co., 1852), 251.

<sup>17</sup> Fisheries Research Board of Canada, “Freshwater Fishes of Canada.” Accessed from: <https://files.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/fishing/198234.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Canadian Nutrient File, “Fish, whitefish, lake, native, baked, per 100g.” Accessed from: <https://food-nutrition.canada.ca/cnf-fce/report-rapport.do>

<sup>19</sup> Canadian Nutrient File, “Fish, bass, fresh water, mixed species, baked or broiled, per 100g.” Accessed from: <https://food-nutrition.canada.ca/cnf-fce/serving-portion.do?id=3134>

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Nutrient File, “Fish, sturgeon, mixed species, baked or broiled, per 100g.” Accessed from: <https://food-nutrition.canada.ca/cnf-fce/serving-portion.do?id=3070>

<sup>21</sup> In 1812, Upper Canada was home to about 1600 British soldiers dispersed through the colony’s numerous garrisons. This number would have been even less in the early-nineteenth century, when the threat of war with the United States was less pervasive. See: George Sheppard, “Wants and Privations’: Women and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada,” *Social History* 28:55 (1995), 173.

<sup>22</sup> John McEwan, *Reminiscences of Niagara, No. 11* (Niagara: Niagara Historical Society, N.D.), 14.

working-class soldiers. But it also reveals how something as miniscule as fishing could become political. Archaeologist Douglas James Pippin fascinatingly interprets why British officers may have preferred soldiers fishing rather than hunting in his dissertation on provisioning British soldiers at Fort Haldimand on Carleton Island near Kingston:

For local acquisition of rations, fishing was a more favorable option from the perspective of the garrison officers, which could be done in the vicinity of the garrison and port. Whether it was from fear of capture, or the soldiers' desertion, the officers exercised a significant degree of control over the soldiers' activities. This included prohibitions against the longer absences necessary for hunting, as a means to augment their provisions.<sup>23</sup>

Permitting soldiers to fish gave officers insight into the personal affairs of their men, which they believed necessary because of the preconceived idea that soldiers were "unskilled, uneducated, and criminal in their activities and demeanor," a prejudice perpetuated by officers and some of their twentieth-century ancestors.<sup>24</sup> The activity of fishing, according to some officers, was also morally beneficial to soldiers. The implementation of fishing parties into the duties of a regiment broke up the monotony of military life and prevented

idle soldiers from getting in trouble; gardening served the same purpose.<sup>25</sup> Thomas Henry Browne, while stationed in Halifax, recalled leading his men on fishing parties which "capitally supplied" the soldiers in his company.<sup>26</sup> Some officers, like Browne and Le Couteur, clearly felt it was better to be loved than feared by their men who, it was hoped, would reward their kindness with obedience. Most British forts in Upper Canada were located in close proximity to waterways or lakes and, therefore, it is obvious why fishing rather than hunting was officers' ideal provision procurement method for enlisted men. Not only did fishing supply troops with fresh food under the panoptic gaze of their overseers, but the activity kept men busy, well-behaved and, hopefully, content.

Beyond fish, which were abundant in Upper Canadian forts and garrisons, some posts had vegetable gardens to supplement soldiers' rations. References to soldiers' vegetable gardens are scant, indicating they were not prevalent, but they certainly existed at Fort Erie and Fort George. Edward Walsh's *Old Fort Erie*, for example, clearly shows a vegetable garden. (See Figure 1) Also, upon visiting the fort, François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt mentioned, "[T]he soldiers have a garden, where they

<sup>23</sup> Douglas James Pippin, "For Want of Provisions: An Archaeological and Historical investigation of the British Soldier at Fort Haldimand (1778-84)," PhD Dissertation, (Syracuse University, 2010), 252-253.

<sup>24</sup> Pippin does a superb job countering this notion. See: Pippin, "For Want of Provisions," 86.

<sup>25</sup> David Lachlan Huf, "The Junior British Army Officer: Experience and Identity, 1793-1815," PhD Thesis, (University of Tasmania, 2017), 178.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.



Figure 1: Edward Walsh, *Old Fort Erie*. Note the officers fishing in the background, the officers shooting in the foreground, and the vegetable garden to the right. (Royal Ontario Museum).

cultivate the necessary vegetables, which by any other means they would not be able to procure.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Brock noted how, in 1803, soldiers at Fort George were employed to make a vegetable garden.<sup>28</sup> One osteoarchaeological study reiterates that British soldiers did, in fact, consume vegetables.<sup>29</sup> Vegetables were clearly consumed by British soldiers in Niagara and perhaps beyond, but what they ate specifically is much more un-

clear, as contemporary soldiers’ memoirs do not mention. Gareth Newfield suggests soldiers ate “cabbages, beans, peas... potatoes, carrots, parsnips, onions, turnips.”<sup>30</sup> Unless necessary, soldiers may have abstained from eating Indigenous crops to which they were unacculturated, like maize, and preferred instead “British” vegetables to maintain their “Britishness” while abroad.<sup>31</sup> Vegetables, such as those mentioned by Newfield, also pro-

<sup>27</sup> François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld-Liancour, quoted in Newfield, “Culinary History of Early Niagara,” 34. Rochefoucauld-Liancour also documented soldiers fishing, stating “I helped one day at fishing with the soldiers, net 100 ft. long, four ft. deep, caught 500 fish sturgeons, pikes, sunfish, salmon, trout, herring.” See: François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld-Liancour, *Reminiscences of Niagara*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ferdinand Brock Tupper, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1845), 34.

<sup>29</sup> Emery, “Exploring Dietary Variability,” 63.

<sup>30</sup> Newfield, “Culinary History of Early Niagara,” 35.

<sup>31</sup> It was feared by both early modern English and Spanish settlers that the consumption of Indigenous foodstuffs would “assimilate” colonists and, consequently, “they would experience unwanted physical, mental, and moral changes.” Trudy Eden, “Food, Assimilation, and the Malleability of the Human Body in Early Virginia,” in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, ed. by



Table 1

Veg- etable	Energy (cal)	Pro- tein (g)	Carbohy- drates (g)	Dietary Fibre (g)
Cab- bage	23	1.5	5.5	1.5
Green beans	46	2	8	2.5
Green peas	84	5.5	15.5	6.5
Potato	87	2	20	1.5
Carrot	35	1	8	2.5
Parsnip	71	1.5	17	3
Onion	44	1.5	10	1.5
Turnip	22	0.5	5	2

Table 1: Nutrient composition of various boiled vegetables per 100-gram serving, according to the Canadian Nutrient File. Created by Jake Breadman.

vided additional carbohydrates and fibre to the soldiers beyond their bread ration. They also supplied nutrients such as potassium, vitamins A and C, and phytochemicals, all of which are necessary for optimal health.<sup>32</sup> (See Table 1) Soldiers could have purchased additional vegetables, but this was unlikely due to their meagre daily wage. Soldiers were paid a mere shilling (1s) per day and, from this, stoppages were deducted that went towards housing, arms, accoutrements, and

more.<sup>33</sup>

This brings us to another factor that determined the availability of consumables: socio-economic status. Soldiers generally did not have expendable income or leisure to hunt, while middle- and upper-class British officers did.<sup>34</sup> Soldiers had strictly regimented days, so leisure was scant and, if they did have free time to hunt, they had to pay for their own ball and shot, an expense they likely could not afford.<sup>35</sup> Plus, their wildly inaccurate mus-

Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), 35. See also: Rebecca Earle, “Climate, Travel and Colonialism in the Early Modern World,” in *Governing the Environment in the Early Modern World: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Iain McCalman, Libby Robin, Sara Miglietti, John Morgan (London: Routledge, 2017), 22-37.

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Scheule and Amanda Frye, “Chapter 18: Vegetables and Vegetable Preparation,” in *Introductory Foods: Fifteenth Edition* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2020), 463.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), xxi.

<sup>34</sup> Two-thirds of officers purchased their rank from 1660-1871. Holmes, *Redcoat*, 157.

<sup>35</sup> Brock allowed soldiers at Fort George “to use their muskets to shoot the countless fowl, on condition

kets made hunting difficult.<sup>36</sup> Le Couteur illustrated the difficulties of hunting with a musket: "In our way [home], a Magnificent deer with Antlers of splendid growth started across our path. I gave Him a volley without effect. Soldiers are not dead shots at a flying object with a single ball."<sup>37</sup> Despite these barriers, soldiers sometimes hunted. An excavated privy at Fort George, likely used by soldiers, revealed a higher reliance on deer and fish by enlisted men compared to officers.<sup>38</sup> It is understandable that soldiers relied on hunting at Fort George, especially given its proximity to the Commons which, according to Betts, "would have provided an ideal environment for deer to thrive."<sup>39</sup> Deer may have also been procured through trade with Indigenous people, especially given the proximity of Fort George to the "Indian Council House" on the Commons.<sup>40</sup> Given the circumstances, soldiers probably did not hunt often but, if they did, they probably used cheap and easy methods to do so such as those illustrated by Lady Simcoe:

The flights of wild pigeons in the spring and autumn is a surprising sight. They fly against the wind and so low that at Niagara the men

threw sticks at them from the fort and killed numbers; the air is somewhat darkened by them. I think those we have met with here have been particularly good. Sometimes they fix a bullet to a string tied to a pole, and knock them down.<sup>41</sup>

Fishing was understandably more popular amongst soldiers because, compared to hunting, it was inexpensive and simple.

By contrast, officers' days were less regimented and therefore they had more opportunities to hunt. Landmann found hunting in the Canadas refreshing compared to the strictly-managed hunting laws in England, and noted: "I soon discovered that I might, without a license, shoot game of any sort, and eat it or carry it away; and catch all the fish in the harbour without giving offense to anyone."<sup>42</sup> Landmann recalled an anecdote from a Royal Artillery Colonel, who stated that "Canada... is the finest country in the world for the sportsman; shooting, flying or on the branch, game of all sorts, wild animals, such as bears, deer, stags, caribos, moose-deer, hares, foxes, &c., and a vast number more."<sup>43</sup> Walsh's watercolours show officers poised for shooting. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3) *Chipaway*

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that they provided their own powder and shot," an expense they likely could not afford. Tupper, *Life*, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Holmes, *Redcoat*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 215.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew W. Betts, "Augmenting Faunal Quantification Procedures Through the Incorporation of Historical Documentary Evidence: An Investigation of Faunal Remains from Fort George," *Ontario History* 69 (2000), 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Eva MacDonald and Suzanne Needs-Howarth, "Dining with John and Catharine Butler before the Close of the Eighteenth Century," *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 42:3 (2013), 38.

<sup>41</sup> Simcoe, *Diary*, 209.

<sup>42</sup> George Thomas Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections of Colonel Landmann, Late of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Vol. I* (London: Colburn & Co., 1852), 184-85.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.



Figure 2: Edward Walsh, *Chipaway*. Note the officers, one of which appears to be carrying a rifle rather than a musket, and the hound in the foreground poised and ready for shooting, while civilians fish on the creek. A British soldier can be seen standing guard in the distance. (William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan)

is particularly insightful because the red-coated officer appears to be carrying a rifle rather than a musket, the former being significantly more accurate and thus more serviceable for hunting.<sup>44</sup> (See Figure 2) Brock himself loved shooting pigeons in his spare time.<sup>45</sup> Some British officers like Major Edward Littlehales were ambitious and hunted more than just pigeons.

While en route to London with John Graves Simcoe, Littlehales remembered killing a buck and doe which they ate the following day.<sup>46</sup> Officers, through hunting and purchase, had lavish, three-course meals. Seemingly, though, officers hunted mostly for leisure not necessity; analysis of faunal remains located around Fort George's Officers' Quarters reinforces

<sup>44</sup> Muskets were only accurate up to about 75 yards, whereas rifles were accurate up to about 150 yards. In *Chipaway*, the officer wields a weapon seemingly shorter than the weapons carried by the officers in *Old Fort Erie*. Rifles were shorter than muskets, which leads me to believe the officer in *Chipaway* is carrying a rifle. Holmes, *Redcoat*, 200.

<sup>45</sup> Tupper, *Life*, 120.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Baker Littlehales, *Journal of an Exploratory Tour Partly in Sleighs but Chiefly On Foot, From Navy Hall, Niagara, to Detroit, Made in the Months of February and March, A.D. 1793, by His Excellency Lieut.-Gov. Simcoe*, with Introduction and Notes by Henry Scadding (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company, Limited, Printers, 1889), 13.

this. In one refuse pit, for example, fresh beef represents 68% of faunal remains, whereas birds and fish comprise less than 1% of the remains.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, just because officers could hunt does not mean they readily incorporated wild game into their diets. As noted by Eric D. Tourigny, “While immigrants to Upper Canada inevitably faced some change in foodways upon arrival, historical records suggest that those who could afford it made efforts to maintain the foodways to which they were accustomed.”<sup>48</sup> Some officers, especially poorer junior officers, may have hunted to reinforce their social status as gentlemen with leisure, while affluent senior officers may have avoided incorporating wild game into their meals, instead preferring imported delights as a means of conspicuous consumption. Officers (but, more likely, senior officers) had the luxury to choose what they consumed, and their preference for beef (affectionately “the Roast Beef of Old England”), as attested to in faunal remains from Fort George, may also stem from associations of fish-consumption with the dietarily strict Catholic French.<sup>49</sup> The type of food available to officers depended on the season, of course, but early-nineteenth century menus indicate what officers’ meals might have looked like. In summer, for example, the first course consisted of potatoes, French beans, whitefish, goose,

red cabbage, mutton, and asparagus. The second comprised of peas, eggs, pigeons, cherry pie, and broccoli. And the third: peach pudding, fruits and nuts, green melons, “hedgehog,” and coffee, tea, and water.<sup>50</sup> Alcohol abounded.

What one ate in Upper Canada was largely determined by socio-economic status, but environmental knowledge also played a part. Local environmental knowledge, according to Miller, was crucial to military success during the War of 1812. Miller claims that the British detrimentally underutilized the 104th Regiment of Foot during the conflict. Uniquely, the 104th Regiment were fencibles, meaning its soldiers were recruited locally, particularly from Atlantic Canada rather than Britain. The Regiment’s local knowledge meant its men were prepared for service in British North America, more so than veterans from Europe. Miller states,

The [British] units coming from Europe had more experience in combat but were unprepared for the climate. The 104th was better adapted to the environment, and being a seasoned unit was more central to success in the War of 1812... A war fought on the frontier of Upper Canada was particularly suited for the hardy backwoodsmen from the Maritime provinces. According to Major General Martin Hunter, ‘The men of the 104th in general are very good Marksmen, and most of them have been brought up in the woods from their infancy.’<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Betts, “Faunal Remains from Fort George,” 32.

<sup>48</sup> Eric D. Tourigny, “Maintaining Traditions: Food and Identity among Early Immigrants to Upper Canada,” *Historical Archaeology* 54 (2020): 367.

<sup>49</sup> Pippin, “For Want of Provisions,” 212.

<sup>50</sup> Newfield, “Culinary History of Early Niagara,” 96-98.

<sup>51</sup> Miller, “Soldier Illness and Environment in the War of 1812,” 183-84.



Given such sentiment, how did ignorance of the local environment contribute to provisioning problems? Did the 49th Regiment of Foot, which had been in the Canadas since the early 1800s, have an easier time procuring food because of their knowledge of the local environment? Comparing the 49th Regiment with the 1st Regiment of Foot (or Royal Scots) confirms Miller's statement that local knowledge assured greater access to food through honest means. In 1801, the 1st Regiment were sent from the Spanish coast to the West Indies. In 1812, they were sent to Lower Canada, and then Upper Canada where they served for the remainder of the War of 1812.<sup>52</sup> The Canadas were a starkly different environment from what the Royal Scots were accustomed to and, consequently, they struggled to honestly procure food. The Royal Scots had such a reputation for thievery that General Gordon Drummond, at high command in Quebec, referred to them as "plundering banditti."<sup>53</sup> By contrast, Courts Martial of the 49th Regiment suggests that their knowledge and management of the local environment, particularly fishing and vegetable-growing, meant they did not need to steal food. From 1810 to 1811, 114 offenses were committed, only one of which specifically related to stealing food from locals. Private Neil Lawler was the only soldier

punished "for dishonest conduct in stealing two pieces of Salmon from [an] inhabitant."<sup>54</sup> Lawler's case, representing only 0.9% of offenses, seems to be an aberration rather than the norm, whereas thievery by the Royal Scots was so common that high command in Quebec noted it. Brock was impressed by the 49th Regiment and their conduct and stated in 1808 that "Not a desertion has been attempted by any of the 49th for the last ten months, with the exception indeed of Hogan, Savery's former servant[.]" who deserted to marry a local woman.<sup>55</sup> Good behaviour, especially the lack of desertion, implies the 49th Regiment was content, which may be partly attributed to their superior environmental knowledge and, consequently, the wealth of provisions at their disposal. The desperate conduct of the Royal Scots implies they had trouble adjusting to and obtaining food from the environment. The 49th Regiment and their good conduct, however, reinforces Miller's claim that environmental understanding was vitally important to soldiers. Upper Canadian militiaman William Hamilton Merritt, who led the Provincial Light Dragoons during the War of 1812, similarly noted the importance of local environmental knowledge to wartime success: "Circumstances that had ever been fresh in my memory were the means of giving me a perfect knowledge of every by-road

<sup>52</sup> Anonymous, "1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot, 1625-1881," (2001). Accessed from: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20060712193040/http://regiments.org/deploy/uk/reg-inf/001-1.htm>>

<sup>53</sup> Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 129.

<sup>54</sup> Library and Archives Canada, "Nominal Return of the Men tried by Courts Martial held in His Majesty's 49th Regt. from 13<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1810 to 31 May 1811," RG 8 C, Vol. 924, C-3279-1449-1453.

<sup>55</sup> Tupper, *Life*, 49.49th





Figure 3: Edward Walsh, *Fort St. Joseph*. Note the officer, centre, approaching the dock with a fishing rod or musket. (William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan).

in that part of the country, which proved of the greatest service to me on many occasions.”<sup>56</sup> Although not explicitly stated, Upper Canadian militiamen clearly had an advantage when procuring local provisions, but so too did British regiments well-acquainted with their surroundings like the 49th. Landmann, a newcomer to Fort St. Joseph, remembered “there was but little fish in the adjacent waters, and no vegetables were to be procured.”<sup>57</sup> It is, however, more likely that this statement stems from Landmann’s environmental ignorance. Interestingly, Surgeon William Dunlop, who served during the War of 1812, would have undoubtedly agreed

with Miller’s assertion that environmental knowledge was key to regimental success, especially in provisioning:

I have only to remark that... an army might often be kept in the field in an infinitely more serviceable condition than it now is... should [they] be taken into the woods for a month every summer, with a party of woodsmen to teach them how to erect shanties, cut fire-wood and provide for themselves in such a situation... [During the Seven Years War] Sir William Johnson marched his Regiment, who were all woodsmen, from the Mohawk River to Fort Niagara, through the woods, requiring no other support, on that long line of march, than their rifles were amply sufficient to supply them with.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> William Hamilton Merritt, *Journal of Events Principally on the Detroit and Niagara Frontiers, During the War of 1812* (St. Catharines, Canada West: The Historical Society, B.N.A., 1863), 34.

<sup>57</sup> Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections Vol. I*, 326-27.

<sup>58</sup> Dunlop, *Recollections of the American War, 1812-1814* (Toronto: Historical Publishing Co., 1905), 61-62.

Local environmental knowledge was key to provisioning the army in Upper Canada, as noted by Dunlop, a necessity further emphasized by exorbitant wartime food prices.

Purchasing food was much more expensive in wartime, which made it even less likely for soldiers but possible for officers. The War of 1812 disrupted agricultural production, decreased agricultural yields, and thus made food more expensive. Sheppard notes that purchasing food was especially troublesome in the Niagara and Western Districts where most of the fighting occurred.<sup>59</sup> One York resident noted that between 1812 and 1815, the rate of inflation was estimated to be near 300%.<sup>60</sup> However, the effects of war, and more generally of being in a garrison town, were pronounced elsewhere too. While in Kingston in 1813, Le Couteur noted, "Stock leaner than at dear Fredericton. Butter 2/6 per pound, Honey 5/... Porter 2/6 the bottle, eggs 3/ the dozen."<sup>61</sup> Shortly thereafter, as Le Couteur and his regiment received word of American troop movements, he was surprised to see "not the American Army but an Army of market carts."<sup>62</sup> Civilians' lives were disrupted by war and so they eagerly tried to capitalize on the influx of soldiers into their towns, although their steep prices made their goods wildly inaccessible to enlisted men. Soldiers, as previously mentioned, made less than

1s a day with stoppages. If a soldier purchased eggs, for example, they would have to pay 3s for a dozen which, as a generous estimate, was a soldier's weekly wage. Simply, it was difficult enough for soldiers to buy food in peacetime, but it was nearly impossible in wartime. For officers, purchasing food in wartime was costly although doable. Victuals became significantly more affordable as the conflict ended: "The peace had made a sudden and most agreeable change in the prices of many articles[,] Oats at Kingston from Ten shillings to 3/9 the bushel. Butter from Four shillings to nine pence the pound and Provisions, meat & poultry, in proportion."<sup>63</sup> Like purchasing, hunting and fishing were made additionally difficult by war.

Hunting and fishing were especially difficult for British soldiers and officers garrisoned close to American forces. Posts distant from military action were much safer to hunt at in wartime, however. In 1814, Le Couteur and his regiment were sent to Queenston, located literally a rifle-shot from the United States, and the Lieutenant comically noted the dangers of wartime hunting:

Basserer & I went out fishing just below the whirlpool where we caught Black and white Bass & Pickerel—the former & latter excellent fish. N.B.: A Yankee Rifleman fired at Basserer and me and drove us from our fishing. We have a very pleasant and quiet post

<sup>59</sup> Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 112-14.

<sup>60</sup> Sheppard, "Women and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada," 166.

<sup>61</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 109.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

here—good fishing but bad shooting.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, Le Couteur considered it exceptional to traverse the woods near the American-occupied Fort Erie without facing American small-arms fire: “In the woods all day with the company on duty making abatis for our entrenchments. The Yankees did not fire at us all day for a wonder!”<sup>65</sup> Dunlop’s experience of wartime hunting was significantly safer than Le Couteur’s, likely because he was distant from the action. Dunlop and his men were posted to “a block-house in the woods of Gananoque, between Brockville and Kingston.”<sup>66</sup> Dunlop and his company partook in their fair share of salted beef but the woods granted them abundance: “Being on the banks of a fine stream, we never were at loss for ducks, and in the surrounding pine woods the partridges were abundant... [W]e had at least a plentiful, if not an elegant table.”<sup>67</sup> In 1814, Dunlop was sent to Lake Simcoe with his regiment, another sleepy post with little action: “Our amusements consisted in shooting partridges and snaring the Canadian hare[.]”<sup>68</sup>

War sometimes complicated hunting and fishing, but it certainly elevated stress and trauma amongst soldiers which, subsequently, made them drink excessively.<sup>69</sup> Drinking, on one hand, am-

plified tensions between soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and, sometimes, their officers. On the other, drinking songs, central to the ritual of alcohol consumption, bonded fellow soldiers over the supposed malevolence of their NCOs. Sharing food and drink also bridged social relations between soldiers, officers, and enemies. Soldiers often drank more than their solitary gill of rum. Private Thaddeus Lewis remorsefully remembered his time in the King’s Service because of a month-and-a-half long bender:

No sooner did one draught of spirits die within me, than I drank another draught, and down on my bed and slept on in this state of intoxication day after day. As near as I can recollect this state of things commenced about the first of February, and continued until the 22nd day of March [1815] which was about 50 days.<sup>70</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that Lewis in later life was a Methodist minister and his post-war writings are therefore likely influenced by his religious sensibilities and the growing temperance movement in mid-nineteenth century Upper Canada. Brock, too, mentioned that the 49th Regiment spent its time “drinking rum without bounds[.]” a statement reiterated by Courts Martial as 50% of

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>65</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 185.

<sup>66</sup> Dunlop, *Recollections*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>69</sup> Miller, “Soldiers Illness and Environment in the War of 1812,” 145.

<sup>70</sup> Thaddeus Lewis, *Autobiography of Thaddeus Lewis, a Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada* (Picton, Ontario: 1865), 36.

the offenses committed were related to drunkenness.<sup>71</sup> Drunkenness surely inflamed tensions between soldiers and their commanding officers, typically non-commissioned officers. Private John Hanlon was accused of being “Drunk at Evening Parade, and for Disrespect to Sergeant Major S [illegible].”<sup>72</sup> Privates Thomas Bray, James Grey, and James Tobin were similarly drunk and disrespectful to their sergeants.<sup>73</sup> Corporals were not immune from the violence of drunken stupors either, as Private David Byers was accused of “Being Drunk, also for abusing Corporal Renwick, and for making use of insolent language to him in the execution of his duty.”<sup>74</sup> Resentment between soldiers and NCOs, which heightened when alcohol was intermixed, is well-testified in nineteenth century music like “The Rogues’ March,” a song played while soldiers were flogged, and included the following lyrics: “Fifty [lashes] I got for selling my coat, / Fifty for selling my blanket. / If ever I ‘list for a soldier again, / The devil shall be my sergeant.”<sup>75</sup> Officers, too, sometimes faced soldiers’ drunken outbursts. Private Joseph Brown committed “Unsoldier like

conduct in making of language tending to promote disturbance in the barrack room, & for being drunk before morning parade, also for disrespect to Lieut. Loring.”<sup>76</sup> Courts Martial for the 104th Regiment stationed at Fort Howe in Saint John suggest the universal problem of soldiers’ drinking in British North America. Out of the 32 cases between 4 June and 23 September 1812, 40% are related to drunkenness.<sup>77</sup> At least 6 of the 32 cases relate to disrespect between enlisted men and their superiors. Amongst these soldiers, alcohol consumption and drunkenness neurologically reduced their inhibitions, which subsequently spurred rash verbal and physical abuse against their superiors.<sup>78</sup>

Alcohol abuse also would have had devastating effects on the health of both soldiers and officers, but especially enlisted men. Given squalid living conditions and unhygienic practices, it is unsurprising that soldiers were often sick. The garrison at Niagara, “a noted place for intermittent fevers,” was particularly bad, and according to Landmann: “The troops at Fort George, but more particularly at Navy Hall, were so much af-

<sup>71</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “Nominal Return... 49th Regt.,” C-3279-1449-1453.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Lewis Winstock, *Songs & Music of the Redcoats: A History of the War Music of the British Army, 1642-1902* (London: Leo Cooper, 1970), 97.

<sup>76</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “Nominal Return... 49th Regt.,” C-3279-1449-1453.

<sup>77</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “List of Detachments Court Martials of the 104<sup>th</sup> Regt. held at Fort Howe, Saint John between the half yearly Inspection on the 4<sup>th</sup> June and 23 Sept. 1812,” R2513-116-3-E, Vol. 73.

<sup>78</sup> C. McIntosh and J. Chick, “Alcohol and the Nervous System,” *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, & Psychiatry* 75:3 (2004), 5.

flicted by that disease, that during one of the summers, whilst I was in Canada, a garrison amounting to three or four hundred men could scarcely muster fifty men fit for duty.”<sup>79</sup> Alcohol abuse only exacerbated soldiers’ poor health. Excessive alcohol consumption has long been associated with “less complete recovery from infection and physical trauma, including poor wound healing... [reduction of the] the body’s ability to defend against infection... and impede[d] recovery from tissue injury,” all of which would be particularly troublesome for soldiers prone to sickness and physical injuries.<sup>80</sup>

While drunkenness divided fellow soldiers and, sometimes, their officers, sharing food bridged social relations within the rigidly classist British army. Byfield remembered how, one evening, “Lieutenant Barnett came to us, and asked us for some provisions, as he had tasted none all the day. We being scarce, my comrade asked me what he was to do. I told him to give him some, as he was a gentleman and a soldier.”<sup>81</sup> Officers, too, returned the favour. Le Couteur noted how “Lake fishing is very amusing. We used to catch forty or fifty fish constantly, enough for all the Flankers[.]”<sup>82</sup> This excerpt implies that Le Couteur shared his bountiful catch amongst the flank com-

pany he commanded. Sharing a drink also helped build relationships with enemy soldiers. Byfield recalled an experience with an imprisoned American soldier where “I offered him some rum. He said, he did not expect to be so treated, if he was taken prisoner, and wept, begging that I would not let him fall into the hands of the Indians.”<sup>83</sup> Sharing rum established a relationship between these soldiers, and was the precursor to Byfield’s assurance that the prisoner would be protected under his care. Both food and drink united and divided soldiers. For officers, though, food and drink deepened established ties amongst them.

The officers’ mess was, by its lavish existence, exclusive to the middle- and upper-class, which consequently deepened social relations amongst messmates. Exclusion did not apply to fellow gentlemen, whether they be from a different regiment, division, civilians, or even enemies. Le Couteur spoke of the family feeling amongst his regimental messmates:

But our mess was the mess of the day – conducted on guest days like the table of a Nobleman – every thing of the best – no noise among waiters of officers, all aiding one another to do honor to the Guests, never mind whose they were... It was a happy mess of brotherhood that jolly, gentlemanlike 104th

<sup>79</sup> Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections*, Vol. II, 21.

<sup>80</sup> Dipak Sarkar et al., “Alcohol and the Immune System,” *Alcohol Research: Current Reviews* 37:2 (2015), 153.

<sup>81</sup> Byfield, *Narrative*, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Le Couteur commanded the light infantry, one of the ten companies of the 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. The “flank” companies, situated on each end of the line, were divided into light infantry and grenadiers. Light infantry, which Le Couteur commanded, were skirmishers, while grenadiers were akin to shock troops. Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 226.

<sup>83</sup> Byfield, *Narrative*, 40.



for four years.<sup>84</sup>

The “brotherhood” of which Le Couteur spoke is later reiterated by Sir James Kempt, who visited the 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment’s mess during the War of 1812: “Sir James was pleased to say that He had never seen a mess so like the establishment of a private family of distinction.”<sup>85</sup> Like Le Couteur, Dunlop felt he and his mess-mates were a family too:

I joined my regiment at Fort Wellington, and a fine jovial unsophisticated set of ‘wild tremendous Irishmen’ I found my brother officers to be. To do them justice (and I was upwards of four years with them) a more honest-hearted set of fellows never met round a mess table. No private family ever lived in more concord or unanimity than did ‘Our Mess.’<sup>86</sup>

Not only were Dunlop and his mess-mates like a family, which is reinforced by his use of the term “brother officers,” but they were a harmonious family. Family feeling amongst officers was further solidified through ritual acts that took place while drinking and eating, like singing and roasting.<sup>87</sup> One evening, Littlehales and his company stopped at an “old Mississauga hut” near London, where “[a]fter taking some refreshment of salt pork and venison... we, as usual, sang God save the King, and went to

rest.”<sup>88</sup> Far removed from their regular mess, officers reaffirmed their social relations with one another through songs, like the anthem, which reinforced their shared bond and dedication to King George III. Social relations could be improved beyond the regiment, too. Le Couteur remembered dining with officers from different regiments of the British army, the Royal Navy, Commissary Department, Royal Artillery, and local gentlemen.<sup>89</sup> Just as sharing food and drink brought together Byfield and an American prisoner, it similarly brought together British and American officers. Le Couteur was tasked with escorting two American ladies to the American-occupied Fort George during the 1813 Niagara campaign. Upon arriving at Fort George, Le Couteur met and befriended an American officer:

We got to be excellent friends in a Jiffy for I talked to Him as if He had been of our mess... His dinner came – a better one than I had smelt since I dined with Genl. Vincent – Capital beef steaks, Potatoes, and a bottle of excellent brandy. ‘You’ll picnic with me?’ ‘With the greatest of pleasure?’ – and avidly, I might have added.<sup>90</sup>

British and American officers from the same class were fast friends, and one way to become *faster* friends was to eat together.

<sup>84</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 154.

<sup>85</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 210.

<sup>86</sup> Dunlop, *Recollections*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2009), 80.

<sup>88</sup> Littlehales, *Journal*, 11-12.

<sup>89</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 126, 153, 154, 157, 158, 203, 210, 212.

<sup>90</sup> Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 134.

The shared dinner, and the conversation it entailed (around hunting, especially), led one of the American officers to remark, “Much pleasanter Sport, isn’t it, than shooting one’s own kindred and language[,]” to which Le Couteur stated, “I shook hands with Him at his nice feeling and we three young Men were like brother officers... How uncomfortably like a civil war it seemed when we were in good-humoured friendly converse – far less animosity than between Cavaliers and Roundheads.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, as peace was declared, toasting helped re-build severed social relations. Le Couteur remembered a heartwarming visit paid by American officers to their mess in Kingston, “We... gave them a dinner, and made our Band play ‘Yankee Doodle’ on drinking the President’s health which gave them great pleasure.”<sup>92</sup>

Sharing food and drink also established and solidified social relations between Indigenous people and British soldiers and officers. Littlehales remembered the hospitality shown to him and Simcoe at a Delaware village near the Thames: “[H]ere we were cordially received by the Chiefs of that nation, and regaled with eggs and venison.”<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, there is no mention of any ceremony whatsoever except the food that was offered, which highlights the central role sharing food and drink played in af-

firming loyalty and social relations. Littlehales and Simcoe met the same treatment at two other Indigenous villages.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Joseph Brant, the famed Mohawk leader, often entertained British officers and used food and drink to display his “Britishness”:

Captain Brant who is well acquainted with European manners, received us with much politeness and hospitality... Tea was on the table when we came in, served up in the handsomest China plate and every other furniture in proportion... Supper was served up in the same genteel stile [sic]. Our beverage, rum, brandy, Port and Madeira wines... Our first toasts were, King, queen, Prince of Wales, and all the royal family of England; and next, to the brave fellows who drubbed the Yankees [sic] on the 4th of last November; all given by [Brant] in regular progression.<sup>95</sup>

Brant’s tableware, manners, and drink tacitly informed his guests, typically British officers like Campbell, that he was like them. The toast to the Royal Family and British martial prowess was further vocal affirmation that all were ideologically unified despite their racial differences. Indeed, the colonial-style house in which Brant hosted sumptuous dinners for fellow British officers further emphasized his “Britishness.”<sup>96</sup> (See Figure 4) Indigenous people also used food to foster better relations with British soldiers. An Indigenous family took care of

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-36.

<sup>92</sup> First read in Lafferty, “Drink and Soldiering,” 9; Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 222.

<sup>93</sup> Littlehales, *Journal*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Littlehales, *Journal*, 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Campbell, *Travels*, 190-95; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 125-28; Landmann met Brant with similar approbation twice. See: Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections, Vol. II*, 27-28 and 136.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 125-28



Figure 4: Edward Walsh, *The House of Capt. Brant*. Here, Joseph Brant hosted British officers to exquisite dinners that deepened social relations between the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River and the British. (U. of Michigan).

Byfield after the disastrous 1813 Battle of the Thames, for example:

We were invited to one of the [Indigenous] huts, and the head of the family was very kind, he killed a pig, and dressed it; boiled some Indian corn, and made soup; and entertained the whole of us, in a very friendly manner.<sup>97</sup>

Nineteenth century settlers believed Indigenous drunkenness led to misdeeds so, consequently, abstention from alcohol was one way Indigenous people improved social relations with them.<sup>98</sup> Brock, for example, particularly liked Tecumseh and the Shawnee because they

refrained from drinking alcohol:

He who most attracted my attention was a Shawnee chief, Tecumseh... A more sagacious or a more gallant warrior does not, I believe, exist. He was the admiration of everyone who conversed with him. From a life of dissipation he has not only become in every respect abstemious, but he has likewise prevailed on all his nation, and many of the other tribes, to follow his example.<sup>99</sup>

Tecumseh's abstention from alcohol was not to appease settlers, however, but was part of a larger Shawnee prohibition on white goods and culture enacted by the religious teachings of his brother, Ten-

<sup>97</sup> Byfield, *Narrative*, 37.

<sup>98</sup> Julia Roberts, "A mixed assemblage of persons': Race and Tavern Space in Upper Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* 83:1 (2002), 5.

<sup>99</sup> Tupper, *Life*, 238-39.

skwatawa.<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, Tecumseh's temperance positively impacted Anglo-Shawnee relations during the War of 1812 as they were perceived by Brock, and other officers, as thoroughly sober and thus well-ordered. In 1799, Landmann met Chief Cawgawguichin at Fort St. Joseph, "the station at which all the Indians in that vicinity, attended to receive their portions of the annual presents sent from England[.]"<sup>101</sup> As Brant's table manners impressed Campbell, Cawgawguichin's awed Landmann, who referred to the Chief as "a rare instance of sobriety and self-command amongst the natives of Upper Canada, a man of extraordinary ambition to establish a character, far above the rest of his nation[.]"<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Landmann considered the "Laurette Indians... far advanced towards civilisation" because they had European cooking accoutrements and tableware, amongst other things.<sup>103</sup> The medium by which food and drink were made also denoted civility. Food and drink united settlers and Indigenous people, but it also had the potential to divide them as well.

Indigenous concerns over hunting and harvest, two activities disrupted by war, led some British officers to consider them unreliable allies. John Norton, a

Mohawk war leader and close friend of Joseph Brant, recalled the unreliability of his British-allied warriors during the harvest season. In October 1812, many of Norton's warriors "had gone home... The fall of the leaf – the season for hunting the buck – had arrived, and many had gone to the woods to supply their wants by the chase."<sup>104</sup> The temperamental actions of the Haudenosaunee led Brock to derisively call them a "degenerate race," especially compared to his perceived loyalty and dedication of the Shawnee Confederacy.<sup>105</sup>

Soldiers and officers had access to a wide array of different food and drink. Enlisted men had easy access to several types of fish throughout Upper Canada. However, attaining fish, vegetables, and other protein sources was generally made more difficult by war, especially for enlisted men. Fishing, too, reveals the extraordinary lengths to which officers went to avoid mingling with soldiers, whom some officers distrusted. Some officers, though, believed fishing morally beneficial to their men and encouraged them to partake in such activities. Both soldiers and officers, too, may have preferred consuming "British" foods to maintain their "Britishness" while abroad. Offic-

<sup>100</sup> Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99–100.

<sup>101</sup> George Thomas Landmann, *Adventures and Recollections of Colonel Landmann, Late of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Vol. II* (London: Colburn & Co., 1852), 100.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–108.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 127–28.

<sup>104</sup> John Norton, *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812*, edited by Carl Benn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 123.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Isaac Brock to George Prevost, 7 September 1812 in Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 88.

ers, on the other hand, usually had luxurious feasts even in wartime, which were spurred by the prevalence of hunting amongst them. Senior officers in particular, though, may have preferred imported delights as a way to highlight their vast wealth. Local environmental knowledge, too, was vitally important to acquiring food, lest soldiers turn to illegal means of doing so. Additionally, drunkenness divided soldiers and, sometimes, officers but food also bound officers and enlisted men together. The socially exclusive officers' mess reinforced homosocial bonds amongst middle- and upper-class officers through toasting, singing, and sharing consumables. Similarly, Indigenous people navigated relationships with soldiers

and officers by sharing food, toasting to King George III, and moderating alcohol consumption. Indigenous concerns over food however, particularly in wartime, exacerbated settlers' animosity towards them.

Further study might compare what British and American soldiers and officers ate in peace and war and ponder whether diet played a role in their respective wartime successes. Additionally, what did the wives of soldiers and officers eat, and how did gender influence what they consumed? Assessing the bodily effects of alcohol consumption and drunkenness in greater detail might also help explain why soldiers were so prone to illness and disease.

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