RHETORIC AND REALITIES: WOMEN, GENDER, AND WAR DURING THE WAR OF 1812 IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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ABSTRACT

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The bicentennial of the War of 1812 has reinvigorated interest in the conflict, but there are still elements of this war which remain un plumbed. Within the locality of the Great Lakes region, using diaries, journals, and letters as my main primary sources, I explore how gender dynamics established by whites prior to the War of 1812 influenced a mindset that said women were incapable of fruitful participation in warfare. In contrast to those who argue that women’s participation in the War of 1812 was extraordinary, I argue that women participated by any means that they were permitted. Although this participation occasionally flew in the face of traditional gender boundaries, many women aided in war efforts through everyday means, though they ultimately received little acknowledgment because their actions were reinterpreted through a lens of domesticity. My research shows that women were a significant part of the War of 1812, despite gendered thinking which regulated them to the role of the victim.
This is for my grandmother, Blennie Quirke. I love you, Grandma. Thank you for giving me this chance.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION: RHETORIC AND REALITIES:**

**WOMEN, GENDER, AND WAR DURING THE WAR OF 1812 IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION** ................................................................. 1

- The Back-story: What Caused the War of 1812? .................................................. 5
- The State of the Combatants ................................................................................... 7
- Historiography ......................................................................................................... 12
- Absences and Explanations ..................................................................................... 23
- Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 25

**CHAPTER ONE:**

**GENDER PERCEPTIONS LEADING INTO THE WAR OF 1812** ........................................ 26

- Women’s Forgotten Roles in the Revolutionary War ............................................. 26
- Inner Sphere, Outer Invisibility ............................................................................. 29
- Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 35

**CHAPTER TWO: WHITES AND NATIVES:**

**NOTIONS OF GENDER AND WARFARE** ................................................................. 37

- The “Nonconforming” Gender Roles of the Native Peoples ................................. 37
- Gender Based Neutrality in Warfare ..................................................................... 42
- Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 47

**CHAPTER THREE: MALE RHETORIC:**

**FEARS BOTH ESTABLISHED AND CONFIRMED** ................................................. 48

- Acts of Native Violence ............................................................................................ 49
The Fort Dearborn “Massacre” .................................................................................. 51
Fear Mongering ........................................................................................................ 53
White Men’s Duty ...................................................................................................... 56
The Surrender of Fort Detroit ................................................................................... 58
Acts of White Violence .............................................................................................. 63
Fires along the Niagara Frontier ............................................................................... 66
Theft and Destruction ................................................................................................. 69
Starvation Worries .................................................................................................... 73
The Burden of Women ............................................................................................... 77
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 81

CHAPTER FOUR: FEMALE REALITIES:

CONTRIBUTION AND SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF WAR ........................................... 83

Partners in War: Female Camp Followers and Military Retainers ......................... 84
Mothering a Nation: Homefront Supporters .......................................................... 92
Women Who Spoke Their Minds: Instigators, Resisters, and Protectors ............. 101
Survivors ..................................................................................................................... 107
Friendly Enemies: Relationships with the Natives ................................................. 114
Female Spies: Unassuming Covert Operatives ....................................................... 121
Women Who Were “Masculine:”

Active Amazons, Androgynous Warriors, and War Leaders ............................... 125
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 129

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................... 130

Further Conclusion: How Little Things Change .................................................... 132
INTRODUCTION: RHETORIC AND REALITIES: WOMEN, GENDER, AND WAR
DURING THE WAR OF 1812 IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Lasting only two and a half years and resulting in a return to status quo ante bellum, the War of 1812 is a conflict which seems largely regulated to being a historical footnote, a misunderstood if not forgotten war.¹ For the United States of America, it holds neither the underdog glamour of its prequel, the Revolutionary War, nor the moral righteousness of the Civil War. For Britain, it is a postscript to decades spent fighting against France. It is an achievement for Canada but one diluted by the complexities of Canadian nationalism at the time: many of “Canada’s” victories and war heroes currently celebrated were British. For the Native peoples of North America, like so many other conflicts, it was a loss. There is a marked deficiency of general scholarship of this war.

When one considers the study of women in the War of 1812, this deficiency becomes a drought, and even after the passage of two hundred years, women’s participation in the War of 1812 remains principally undocumented. This is a condition stemming in part from interpretations contemporaneous to the war. The War of 1812 lasted from 18 June 1812 to 18 February 1815.² This means that the conflict took place mere decades after the Revolutionary War, and within the lifetime of many individuals who had taken part in that conflict. Women actively, advantageously, participated in the American Revolution, yet their contributions were

² The Treaty of Ghent was actually signed on 24 December 1814 and ratified by the British government on 30 December. However, it was not ratified by the United States until 18 February 1815, formally ending the War of 1812. Before news reached the United States that peace had been brokered, the Battle of New Orleans was fought on 8 January 1815.
not commonly highlighted in the years following the Revolution, nor were they turned to as potential assets when war broke out again. Why was this?

Linda De Pauw explains that women “have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war,” but that “the roles of women in war are hidden from history. The deep conviction… that the gendered roles of mother and warrior should be forever distinct, makes it difficult to remember how frequently they have been combined.”^3 Louise Anne May agrees, saying that “the equation of the military with masculinity and with men appears to be one of the most persistent of gender definitions, cross-culturally and throughout history.”^4 But such truths result from binary thinking, that the socially constructed gender categories of male and female are diametrically opposed and must be maintained even when societal norms have been disturbed by warfare. But how does this fit into the context of the War of 1812?

In the period prior to the war, in particular the roughly thirty years which separated it from the American Revolution, middle- and upper-class whites in the United States and Canada began to consider that gender should play a larger role in influencing one’s position in life than social status. Thus boundary lines were strengthened between domestic and civic life, with women being delegated to the former, as it was assumed that they were naturally nurturing and maternal, while men were given a defensive position over the latter.

But warfare creates, and then continually exasperates, gender anxieties because it stresses gender boundaries. In response, there is a desire to more strictly enforce and maintain gender roles during wartime because it typically involves a long-term removal of men from civilian society. White men had to watch their daughters, mothers, sisters, and wives take up public

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employment and heavy outdoor labor, the sort of work that women normally only did if they were poor, black, or Native. These groups on the margins were seen as lesser and unwomanly for not having the social or economic privilege – or simply not having the desire – to learn and perform gender roles which had been developed outside of, and without input from, their own race and class groups.

Changing thoughts about gender among the generation of the American Revolution contributed to a mindset in which women’s involvement in the Revolution was reinterpreted as maternal, reinforcing an older European mindset that held women were weaker and in need of protection. This did not reflect women’s full contribution to the American Revolution. In turn, white men came to believe that they were fully responsible for the brave defense of the nation, which was a large-scale extension of the home. Yet, as in the American Revolution, women contributed to the War of 1812 in meaningful, productive ways. Despite pressure from society to maintain a domestic life untouched by war’s disruptions, women across Canada and the United States, black, Native, and white alike, were active participants in the War of 1812, contributing both in adherence and in defiance to the expected gender roles of the day.

I have divided this thesis into four chapters. The first discusses the gender roles that were expected of men and women in the United States and Canada during the War of 1812. It explains how they developed in the period leading up to the war, specifically from the Revolutionary War onward, and how women’s activities during the Revolution were reinterpreted as a result. In the second chapter, I address how these gender roles, as a construction of middle- and upper-class whites, did not fully translate across social, cultural, and economic lines, the criticisms that whites had of Native nonconformity to their gender roles, and how Natives were equally disparaging of white notions of gender. Additionally, I explain how whites had imbibed a
thought process that connected gender to combat capabilities, which lead them to equate the “inability” of Natives to conform to white gender expectation to an inability to respect the protected position of noncombatants, who could largely be understood to be female. In chapter three, I analyze the rhetoric put forward by white men in Canada and the United States about the negative consequences the War of 1812 would have for women and how men advocated the best ways for women to fulfill their own gender obligations. Finally, chapter four addresses the ways that women defied men’s fears to be active, effective participants in the war.

I have restricted the scope of this thesis to the Great Lakes region, which consisted of the American states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, the American territories of Michigan, Indian, and Illinois, and the province of Upper Canada. These locations served as the western front of the War of 1812. The conflict affected this region on an immediate, daily basis, as opposed, for example, to its effects on the American Northeast and the Canadian Maritimes, where there was an effort to maintain friendly relations even during the war, or in the American South, where the Battle of New Orleans was not fought until after the ink was well dry on the

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5 The area was, in part, a region of sparsely settled wilderness. During this time period, Keating says that, “there were no urban places across the western Great Lakes that we would recognize today as cities.” Ann Durkin Keating, Rising Up From Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 7. As of 18 October 1811, Cleveland consisted of only sixteen homes, two taverns, two stores, and one school, and its commerce was a “title trade in salt, and sometimes a little in flour, pork, and whiskey; but the whole is trifling, and will continue so, until a harbour be formed.” It was, therefore, “dignified with the title of a city.” John Melish. Travels through the United States of America, in the Years 1806 & 1807, and 1809, 1810 & 1811: Including an Account of Passages Betwixt America & Britain, And Travels Through Various Parts of Britain, Ireland, and Canada, in Visions of the Western Reserve: Public and Private Documents of Northwestern Ohio, 1750-1860, ed. Robert A. Wheeler (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 120. Newark, despite having been the capital of Upper Canada, had a population of only about 1500 before the war. Richard V. Barbuto, Niagara 1814: America Invades Canada (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 47. Thus, towns of the Great Lakes could easily find themselves overwhelmed by a new population of soldiers, foreign or domestic, that far outstripped its own residents. Colonel Burn informed a friend that he had been unable to write while in Sackets Harbor because “that village being so much crowded by the military that there was scarcely room to turn around.” James Burn to Charles Jared Ingersoll, 7 April 1813, in “Colonel James Burn, 2nd U.S. Light Dragoons,” The War of 1812 in Person: Fifteen Accounts by United States Army Regulars, Volunteers and Militiamen, ed. John C. Fredriksen, 182-194 (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 184.
Treaty of Ghent. This high degree of recurrent conflict also means that a wide variety of primary source documents were created in and about the Great Lakes.

This region was also a point of complex intersection for Americans, Canadians, and Natives. According to Ann Durkin Keating, “the Native and non-Native peoples who lived in this Indian Country did so… [through] dense webs of relationships. In fact, Indian Country was built on deep tribal, national, personal, and trade networks. As people moved around the region, their locations changed, but their relationships were not necessarily broken.” Though this physical closeness helped enable these relationships, it also fed tensions that led to the outbreak of war. It also resulted in a situation where people could have had personal relationships that outweighed their nations’ enmity. The peoples of Upper Canada and the American Northwest were not waging war against a foreign army; they were fighting their neighbors, friends, and sometimes even family.

The Back-story: What Caused the War of 1812?

The War of 1812 was rooted in naval conflicts resulting from the Napoleonic Wars. The fledgling United States found itself caught between the superpowers of France and Great Britain on the high seas, as both countries “sought to deny American trade to the other, leading them to

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6 Northern Vermont had “let it be known in Lower Canada that they wished to continue with normal trade [during the course of the war], obtaining British manufactured goods in exchange for the agricultural products so necessary to feed the British Army.” J. Mackay Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 1999), 54. On average, though, the war and conditions leading up to it severely disrupted trade, and, as a result, “shortages and high prices beset most people.” In particular, naval conflicts saw to it that moving products into, out of, or between Canada and the United States remained difficult throughout the war. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, “Introduction,” in *Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Early America: From the Colonial Era to the Civil War*, eds. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, xi-xxi (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007), xv.

seize American vessels and confiscate their cargoes.” Great Britain was also charged with impressing United States sailors into the Royal Navy.

To the United States, these actions were costly in human and economic terms, but such depredations also had political and psychological ramifications. The United States had to respond to the situation in a way that allowed it to maintain its legitimacy as a country without violating its neutrality and embroiling itself in European warfare. Great Britain, meanwhile, saw gaining extra bodies from naval impressments and preventing trade between the United States and France as necessary parts of its continuing their fight against Napoleon.

The War of 1812 was also the result of unrest in the western Great Lakes region, and was to a large degree a continuation of conflict in the area carrying on from the Revolutionary War. American westward settlement was increasingly abutting territory that was inhabited by Native people. Tribes in this area were less likely to have large permanent settlements, surviving on small-scale farming supplemented by hunting, gathering, and fishing rather than being full agrarian societies. This meant that their lands were largely unsettled, which made open acres of hunting land seem unused and free to be claimed. And though the whole of the Northwest Territory had nominally been awarded to the United States by Great Britain in the Treaty of Paris (1783), the Native people who lived in the area had not been part of this treaty and territorial rights were being continually, sometimes violently, renegotiated.9

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8 The United States eventually declared that it would place an embargo against one nation if the other agreed to stop interfering with American trade with the signing of Macon’s Bill Number 2. France agreed to the terms. The Selected Letters of Dolley Payne Madison, eds. David B. Mattern and Holly C. Shulman. Charlottesville (University of Virginia Press, 2003), 99-100.

9 Edmund Danziger says that the Native peoples of the Great Lakes Region can be divided into two principal language groups, the Iroquoian and the Algonquian. The former, residing more in the Niagara area, tended towards a lifestyle based on permanent settlements and an agricultural based subsistence, while the later depended more strongly on hunting, gathering, and fishing to support their farming activities. Both Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples, however, depended upon the environment of the Great Lakes for food, homes, clothing, and supplies. Additionally, their “spiritual beliefs, traditions, songs, art work, historical events, and sacred places, such as the graves of ancestors, also linked aboriginal peoples to their Great Lakes homeland.” Edmund Jefferson. Danziger,
The State of the Combatants

When President James Madison declared war on 19 June 1812, the United States consisted of seventeen states and six frontier territories that were populated by approximately 7,500,000 white men and women, about 1,000,000 of whom lived west of the Appalachian Mountains. America’s regular army consisted of fewer than 6,000 officers and enlisted men at the beginning of 1812. Congress had to order an expansion, swelling the army’s ranks to 35,000, and they also arranged for an additional 50,000 men to enlist for the period of a year. One hundred thousand militiamen were called up for a term of six months.

At the time, the term Canada was, politically “just a geographic expression” used to summarize Britain’s North American holdings, which consisted of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Lower Canada (modern day Quebec), and Upper Canada (modern day Ontario), though the people who lived in these locations were referred to as Canadian by themselves, Great Britain, and the United States. In total, British North America was home to approximately

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*Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance During the Early Reservation Years, 1850-1900* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 2

The Iroquoian people were the tribes of the Six Nations (also called the Iroquois Confederacy and the Haudenosaunee) - Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora - and the Huron Confederation. They resided largely in present-day upstate New York, in an area that spanned down from Georgia Bay along Lakes Erie and Ontario. The Algonquians, meanwhile, had land that ranged westward through Lake Superior. The Ojibwa (Mississauga or Chippewa) could be found along the northern shores of Lakes Ontario, Erie, and Huron, residing as far east as the eastern half of Lower Michigan before their settlements swung southward, down around Lake Superior. To the west of Lake Michigan and south of the Ojibwa were the Menominee, Fox (Mesquaki), Sauk, Winnebago, and Potawatomi. The Potawatomi also resided in present-day northeast Illinois, northern Indiana, southern Michigan, and northwest Ohio. The Ottawa inhabited the western parts of the Lower Michigan Peninsula, and their lands extended around the northern shores of Lake Michigan and east to Manitoulin Island. The Kickapoo, Wea, and Miami lived south of the Potawatomi, in present-day Indian and the western parts of present-day Ohio. The Delaware, Seneca, and Wyandot (a western branch of the Huron) also resided in northern Ohio, and the Shawnee lived in the southern portion of the state. Ibid., 1-4.

10 J Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812*, 47; Richard V. Barbuto, “America’s War of 1812,” in *Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Early America: From the Colonial Era to the Civil War*, eds. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, 71-112 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007), 72. Madison made the decision to commence with hostilities immediately, before word had time to be carried to England. Ironically, the decision backfired on the United States when the British brought the war to the American frontier before it received news about the official declaration of war.

11 Taking Canada was supposed to be a simple task, As taking Canada was supposed to be “a mere matter of marching,” in the words of Thomas Jefferson, so six months was thought to have been more than enough time. Quoted in Barbuto, “America’s War of 1812,” 79.
500,000 white inhabitants. The most populous province was Lower Canada, which was home to roughly 300,000, while the least populous was Upper Canada, which had an estimated 76,000.\textsuperscript{12}

Although the entire population of Canada amounted to about a third of New York’s, it “received twenty-five times as much public food relief.”\textsuperscript{13} In an above average year, Canadian farmers could produce the meat and wheat needed to feed themselves with a small surplus left over to trade or sell, but any agricultural surplus typically only extended far enough to provide for Canada’s major cities – Quebec, Montreal, and Halifax. Just in order to feed its regular peace-time garrison, which was also around 6,000, Canada had to import foodstuffs from London and purchase livestock, salt, and grain from the United States.\textsuperscript{14}

Roughly two thirds of Upper Canada consisted of recent émigrés from the United States. Though some of these individuals, known as United Empire Loyalists, had moved to Canada prior to and during the Revolutionary War, others had left America more recently, dissatisfied with the outcome of the Revolution or simply seeking land, and many of them still had relatives in the United States. General Isaac Brock said that “there can be no doubt that a large portion of the population in this neighbourhood [the Niagara Peninsula] are sincere in their professions to defend the county, but it appears likewise evident to me that the greater part are either indifferent to what is passing, or so completely American as to rejoice in the prospects of a change of Governments.”\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, an estimated ninety percent of Lower Canada was of French descent, so it could have seemed as if Canada was populated by citizens of the two nations with which Great Britain was at war.


\textsuperscript{13} Taylor, The Civil War of 1812, 24.

\textsuperscript{14} Barbuto, Niagara 1814, 14; Barbuto, “America’s War of 1812,” 75.

\textsuperscript{15} General Isaac Brock, July 1812, at Fort George, quoted in Barbuto, Niagara 1814, 52.
The Native population of the Great Lakes is estimated by Edmund Danziger to have peaked at 60,000 – 117,000 during the sixteenth century, prior to European arrival, but “recurrent epidemics, intertribal and Indian-white warfare, physical removals, the ever-growing reliance on manufactured goods, and the impact of alcohol all brought havoc to tribal societies,” reducing their populations.16 During the years leading up to the War of 1812, tribes living on the Canadian side of the lakes typically clashed less with their white neighbors because white settlement was not as yet as pervasive in Canada as it was in the United States. Also, according to Roger Nichols, at this time land deals between Natives and the Canadians were less characterized by trickery or threat.17

Thus, in the United States, the War of 1812 was preceded by the decadelong Northwest Indian War (1785-1795). In response to the loss of Native lives and land in both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, and to American settlements encroaching into Native lands in the Northwest Territory, a Western Indian Confederacy was formed which sought to resist and repel the westward expansion of the United States. Principal leaders included Miami war chief Little Turtle, Shawnee war chief Blue Jacket, the Wyandot Roundhead, and the young Shawnee Tecumseh, while American forces were led by General Anthony Wayne and General Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory. Fighting culminated with the Battle of Fallen Timbers and ended with the Treaty of Greenville.

A relative peace resulted from the Treaty of Greenville, which lasted for about a decade, but American expansion continued to move west, reinvigorating the need for a Native resistance movement. Despite the conciliatory desires of people such as Little Turtle and Black Hoof, a

16 Roger L. Nichols, Indians in the United States and Canada: A Comparative History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 123. Danziger, Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance During the Early Reservation Years, 1850-1900, 2.
17 Nichols, Indians in the United States and Canada, 146-147.
fellow Shawnee, and the differing opinions on inter-tribal relationships from men like the Potowatomi leader Main Poc, Tecumseh, with spiritual backing from his brother Tenskwatawa, began to garner support for another confederacy. Tecumseh gained followers from within Shawnee people, from regional neighbors like the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware (Lenape), Miami, Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox (Meskwaki), Winnebago (Ho-Chuck), and Kickapoo, from northern tribes like the Ottawa and Ojibwa (Chippewa) and Iroquois, and he even had a small amount of success among the Creek in the south. 18

Tecumseh’s confederacy operated out of Prophetstown, in the Indiana Territory, which was governed by William Henry Harrison. Harrison’s 1809 negotiation of the Treaty of Fort Wayne gained the United States more than three million acres, increasing United State’s territory well into the Indiana Territory. It raised tensions and motivated Tecumseh to seek allies among southern tribes and the British, and eventually lead to an American army expedition to Prophetstown in November 1811 which resulted in the 7 November 1811 the Battle of Tippecanoe. 19

British weapons used by Natives at the Battle of Tippecanoe seemed to support rumors that the British had been encouraging Native violence within the Northwest Territory. And Britain had been attempting to “court and maintain the allegiance of the Native peoples to the royal cause,” and to regain some of the favor it had lost by signing the Treaty of Paris. 20 However, Allen argues that the British actually sought to delay warfare in the Northwest, attempting to curtail acts of Native violence until fighting could happen on British terms. In particular, in the three years immediately preceding the War of 1812, the officers of the British

18 R. David Edmunds, Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership (Boston, Little, Brown, and Company: 1984), 86-97; 108-114; 107-134.
19 Ibid., 122
Indian Department had policies that required them to discourage active violence by making promises without making official deals and advising against attacking American citizens, while at the same time providing supplies, and sometimes arms, to their allies. They also reminded the Native peoples how treacherous the United States had been, thereby encouraging a continued enmity between two groups that threatened Britain’s North American holdings.  

Contemporaneously, some in the United States tried to cast the War of 1812 as a tragedy that the United States had tried wholeheartedly to prevent, only to be rebuked by Great Britain, leaving war an undesirable inevitability. Dialogue in the United States among those who supported the war spoke of the War of 1812 as a just response to violations of American rights. However, war was not even universally desired in the United States, as the Democratic-Republicans favored going to war, but their Federalist counterparts were strongly opposed to it. And starting a war to defend the sovereign rights of the United States through an invasion of Canada, rather than restricting the fight to the Royal Navy or to the alliance between Tecumseh and his supporters and the British in the Northwest, served to severely ignore the sovereign desires of the Canadian people.

Ultimately, the War of 1812 was “the culmination of a series of escalating irritants and years of tension which had strained relations between Britain and the Unites States.” But it was also the result of justified indignation on the part of Native people who had seen their land and

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21 Allen, “His Majesty’s Indian Allies,” 1, 3.
livelihoods taken from them by dubious means and their people killed and, in the absence of a treaty that would be permanently upheld, had no other recourse that violently fight back.

Historiography

In the historiography of the War of 1812, women are one of the most under researched subjects. In fact, when considering scholarship of substantial length, there is really only one text: Dianne Graves’ *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women in the War of 1812*, originally published in 2007. Graves has additionally contributed to this field of study by transcribing two sets of documents which she drew from for her book - “What About the Ladies …? A Series of Documents Regarding Women and the War of 1812” and "Extracts from the Journal of a Subaltern's Wife Written in Canada during the Years 1812, 1813 & 1814” – for publication in the *War of 1812 Magazine*. Her text is carefully crafted, going well beyond the requisite mention of Laura Secord, and it serves as a lens to a white woman’s general world during this time period, devoting space to childbirth, fashion, and gardening, for example.24 Graves’ work is not lacking in either importance or interest by any means, but it has not exhausted the scholarship which can be done on this topic.

This thesis obviously shares subject matter with *In the Midst of Alarms*, however, unlike Graves, my work attempts to highlight that fact that women during this time were performing under the gender constraints of their society, and that women contributing to warfare should not be a remarkable occurrence. In the opening sentence of his forward to Graves’ text, Donald Hickey sets the tone of the text by saying that “warfare has always been a pre-eminently male

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24 “What About the Ladies …? A Series of Documents Regarding Women and the War of 1812” appeared in the *Documents, Artefacts, and Imagery* section of the December 2006 issue and "Extracts from the Journal of a Subaltern's Wife Written in Canada during the Years 1812, 1813 & 1814” in the same section of the September 2007 issue. See below for information regarding the *War of 1812 Magazine*.

Laura Secord walked twenty miles in June 1813 to deliver intelligence about an impending American attack to Lieutenant James FitzGibbon, allowing him. The information is thought to have aided in FitzGibbon’s victory in the Battle of Beaver Dams. See below for more.
activity.” However, I maintain that warfare has been written about as if it were a “pre-eminently male activity,” and aim to show how gender played a part in constructing women’s role in the War of 1812. Furthermore, I have made use of sources which Graves has not, including ones that offer a greater exploration of what Native women and women from the lower classes of white society did during the war, as well as several collections of military documents.

The single woman who has had a long-term association with the War of 1812 is Canadian Laura Secord. Her story has been the subject of scholarly debate and fictionalized entertainment – in the form of plays, poems, and children’s books – since the middle of the nineteenth century, but this study aims to move beyond the Secord legend. Secord consistently remains the one female name to grace the pages of any significant work on the War of 1812. She appears in textbooks such as In Canadian Studies: An Introductory Reader, and is the focus of Emma A. Currie’s The story of Laura Secord: and Canadian reminiscences, Peggy Dymond Leavy’s Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812, Ruth McKenzie’s Laura Secord: The Legend and the Lady, Sara Sabrina Swain’s The Story of Laura Secord and Fanny Doyle: The Heroines of the Niagara Frontier, and Cecelia Morgan’s “‘Of Slender Frame and Delicate Appearance’: The Placing of Laura Secord in the Narratives of Canadian Loyalist History.” However, despite this interest, or more possibly because of it, Secord’s war story is one which has become complicated by colorful, though unverifiable details involving cows used for distractionary purposes and her near discovery by American patrols. As such, to properly document and unpack her actual war

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26 Curries’ book opens by trying to tie Secord’s story firmly into the history of United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada, making it, to some degree, more a history of the family of James Secord than of Secord herself. However it is useful for examining the relationships which Secord had with women who were part of her husband’s family and with those who numbered among her friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.
involvement could unfairly dominate this paper, so Secord will not be a strong focus at this time.27

Secord and Graves aside, secondary sources devoted principally to women during the War of 1812 are in short supply. George Sheppard’s “‘Wants and Privations:’ Women and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada” looks at the women left behind to fend for themselves on the Upper Canadian home front. Chicago Tribune reporter Jerry Crimmins’ “The Women of Fort Dearborn” documents the women traveling with Captain Nathan Heald’s troops when they were attacked leaving Fort Dearborn, both those who survived and those who perished.

Because this thesis explores gender history, research into scholarship on this topic was necessary. Joan Gundersen’s To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790, Teresa L. Amott and Julie A. Matthaei’s Race, Gender, and Work: A Multicultural Economic History of Women in the United States and Mary Beth Norton’s Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World discuss the changing relationships that women had with work and the public sector during early America, while Cecilia Morgan’s Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850 and Elizabeth Jane Errington’s Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840 cover similar material from a Canadian perspective.

For information regarding women’s participation in warfare, I have consulted Holly Mayer’s Belonging to the Army, Walter Hart Blumenthal’s Women in America from Colonial Times to the 20th Century: Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution, and Lincoln Diamont’s Revolutionary Women in the War for American Independence: A One-Volume

27 Dolley Madison is probably America’s best answer to Laura Secord, with the colorful descriptions of Madison saving George Washington’s portrait featuring in primary education textbooks.
Revised Edition of Elizabeth Ellet’s 1848 Landmark Series, all of which specifically cover women in the Revolutionary War.28

While largely speaking of the two titular women and their particular actions, Cecilia Morgan and Colin Coates’ *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Vercheres and Laura Secord* also speaks pointedly to the gendered accounts which are typically offered up by representations of women in war time; if one must acknowledge that a woman has been involved, she must be portrayed in a way which allows her to keep to her gender role.

For more general knowledge, I have used Linda Grand de Pauw’s *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present*, Richard Shelly Hartigan’s *The Forgotten Victim: A History of the Civilian*, Noel St. John Williams’ *Judy O’Grady and the Colonel’s Lady: The Army Wife and Camp Follower since 1660*, which explores women’s involvement with the British armed forces, and the essay collection *Gender, War, and Politics: Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775-1830*, which offers a more global outlook on the matter.

For information about women of the frontier, Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham’s five volume series *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* and, to a lesser extent, her two volume *Pioneer Families of Cleveland* were incredibly beneficial.29 *Memorial to the Pioneer Women* was created at the end of the nineteen century, when Wickham realized that records dealing with the involvement of women in the settlement of the Western Reserve were lacking. She set about trying to document these stories while the women who lived them were still around

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28 Elizabeth Fries Ellet has been called “the scholar who first introduced women’s history to American readers.” *The Selected Letters of Dolley Payne Madison*, eds. David B. Mattern and Holly C. Shulman, 3.

29 Wickham, an author, historian, and journalist from Cleveland, was the first female to hold an editorial position at a Cleveland newspaper, a champion of women and children in need, and a strong proponent of an increased inclusion of women in the historic record. “Wickham, Gertrude Van Rensselaer,” *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 13 May 2013, [http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=WGVR](http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=WGVR). While the *Memorial to the Pioneer Women* books are very well organized in terms of location – each section focuses on a specific city of one county in the Western Reserve – they are slightly less friendly to researching by date. Some sections only contain accounts of events which happened decades before 1812, while others do not provide coverage of anything occurring prior to the eighteen teens, and the index only allows one to search by location.
to tell them. Under Wickham’s ultimate editorial direction, local historians spoke with the aged
women and grown children who had lived in Ohio region during its settlement period, asking
them to recount their personal histories, and the books document the activities of women who
lived in the region before, during, and after the period of the War of 1812.

When considering available primary sources, unfortunately few exist which were
authored by women, and the majority of those that were are the product of middle- and upper-
class white women. Among these are “Historical memoranda by Mrs. Amelia Harris,” available
in the 1880 The Loyalists of America and Their Times, edited by Egerton Ryerson, which
provides a personal recollection of American aggressions on the Canadian frontier. Harris’
narrative can also be found in Loyalist Narratives of Upper Canada, a 1946 document collection
edited by James J. Talman, alongside “Documents Relating to Catherine White.” White’s writing
shows how normal life did not halt entirely in the face of war. White, who had been a young
newlywed at the time, never saw fit to mention the war which was raging around her, though she
did offer information about the relations which she had with her Native neighbors. Lydia B.
Bacon’s journal, published in Indiana Magazine of History, documents her experiences traveling
with her husband and his regiment. And the “Women and War” section of Canadian company
Galafilm’s The War of 1812 website, has archived transcriptions of documents authored by
women who lived during the war, including Alicia Cockburn, whose husband was Major Francis
Cockburn, Dolley Madison, Anne Prevost, the daughter of General Sir George Prevost, the
Governor General of British troops in Canada, and Laura Secord.

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However, as Cecelia Morgan says, writing women’s history involves “‘uncovering’ and ‘restoring women’s activities, experiences, and identities to the historical record.’” Women can be present in primary sources even when they are not its crucial focus. The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada: With an Appendix, and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors, first published in 1817, is incredibly important for examining the actual cost of the war for women in Upper Canada in both human and economic terms. This text documents the losses experienced by families in the region, typically through a request for aid sent by the sufferer, a note confirming or refuting the validity of the hardship claimed in said request, and a notation documenting what, if anything, was offered in terms of monetary reparations. It is a fascinating, morbid look at the price tag attached to human life and limb, and which losses were deemed worthy of aid.

Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest (DT), edited by Richard C. Knopf, is a ten volume set covering a wide range of topics. The first three volumes deal mainly with the individual correspondences of William Henry Harrison, Return Justice Meigs, and Thomas Worthington. The forth volume collects “Anecdotes of the Lake Erie Area,” while the fifth reproduces the coverage given to the war by the National Intelligencer. Books six through eight deal with letters written to (six and seven) and from (eight) the Secretary of War and the ninth volume is a reproduction of the Fort Fayette freight book. The last book in this series is a publication of documents in the Western Reserve Historical Society’s War of 1812 collection.

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33 This is a text which could likely fuel a chapter on its own, and would be well worth reading for anyone who is interested in the inner workings of an early war relief organization.
These books are, in their majority, a collection of interchanges between American officers and their enlisted men, between these officers and government officials and, less frequently, their British counterparts or Native allies, and DT are worth reading simply to study the delightful interplay of men wrangling for positions of power during a period of crisis. For the purpose of this thesis the set is useful because women are remarkably conspicuous in their presence: When women are mentioned in these exchanges it is nearly inevitably a question of tactics. How will women of a particular locality be affected if a particular choice is made? Thus it becomes possible to clarify what these men thought about the capabilities of the women in their lives and times. In addition, the volumes dealing with the National Intelligencer are useful for building a sense of scope, showing which events happening on the frontier were chosen for dissemination to the citizens of the nation’s capital.

The Canadian counterpart to DT is The Select British Documents of the War of 1812 (SBD), edited by William Wood, which is a three volume set published in four books. The series opens with a one hundred thirty four page overview of the war preceding the first document, something not offered by any of the DT books, and it is organized more by location than by theme. Materials found in the first two volumes are divided into eleven sections: “Preparation, 1801-1812,” “Brock, 1812,” “Operations in the West: Frenchtown; and in the East: Ogdensburg, Winter of 1813,” “Operations in the West: The Maumee, Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson, 1813,” “Operations on Lake Ontario, Spring of 1813,” “Operations on the Frontiers, Summer of 1813,” “Operations in the Lake Erie Region, 1813,” “Operations on the Montreal Frontier, 1813,” “Operations on the Niagara Frontier, December 1813,” “Operations on the Frontiers, 1814,” and “British Counter-Invasion of the United States, 1814.” Both books of the third volume are lumped together under the nebulous heading of “Miscellaneous Documents.”
All three volumes provide material beyond the letter sets which dominate DT. Among these are the fictional pieces including *The War of the Gulls; an Historical Romance in Three Chapters*, the *Diary of WM McCay of the Township of Nelson*, and *Merritt’s Journal, 1812-1815*. The latter, an incredibly readable document providing information about the leisure interactions between Canadian women and British officers, is part of the “Miscellaneous Documents” selection, which is especially useful for finding information about women. SBD also contains a section devoted specifically to “Women and Children,” which covers providing provisions for family members stationed with the troops, and one on “Prisoners of War,” which mentions how women and other noncombatants taken captive by the British or Canadian forces should be treated, and two letters penned by Alicia Cockburn to a cousin.

In terms of personal writings, there are several sources that are readily available. The document collections *Popular Culture in America, 1800-1925: Captivity Tales* and *The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities* illuminate the reasons why mistrusts and fears about the Natives existed so strongly during the War of 1812 and in the years leading up to it. These texts contain numerous dairies, journals, and letters which recount time spent in Native captivity. The journal of Mohawk chief Major John Norton, who was a successful part of the War of 1812 both in the west and on the Niagara Frontier, has been transcribed and published as *The Publications of the Champlain Society: The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816*, edited by Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman. And Donald Graves has edited *Merry Hearts Make Light Days: The War of 1812 Journal of Lieutenant John Le Couteur, 104th Foot*. Le Couteur fancied himself a lady’s man, and his Austenian accounts of balls offer a pleasing look at the more diversionary services offered by women who shared familial and social connections with the soldiers.
One of the most extensive early secondary books about the War of 1812 is Benton J.
Lossing’s *The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812 or Illustrations, by Pen and Pencil, of the
History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the Last War for American Independence.
With Several Hundred Engravings on Wood, by Lossing and Barritt Chiefly from Original
Sketches by the Author.* This fabulously lengthy title is misleading. This book does cover the
War of 1812, but it is truly more a meandering “road trip” though the history of early America
and, to a lesser extent, early North America. Lossing starts crafting his history before the
Revolutionary War begins and does a surprising amount to draw international connections into
his text, putting the American situation into a world context. The entire book is lavishly
illustrated with portraits and signatures, sketches of monuments erected after the war, and
reproductions of the etchings included on the gravestones of some famous Americans. He is
somewhat biased towards his own country, but his attention to small details and his absorption
with the lives of those not typically found worthy of inclusion – Lossing was an early historian
who found Laura Secord worthy of note – make this text worth reading.

Merton Wilner’s four volume *Niagara Frontier: A Narrative and Documentary History*
focuses solely on the Niagara region. Wilner treats the Niagara region as a character player in
these publications, and they work well as a general history of the area. The first two volumes
each begin by focusing on the settling of the region, speaking of the taming of Lake Erie by
European settlers, showcasing some brilliant early sketches of the region’s natural history, and
documenting the establishment of the many forts which would see action through the American
Revolution and the War of 1812. These books are somewhat unique in that they also devote page
space to exploring the myths and legends unique to Niagara. The first volume contains detailed
accounts of the burning of Buffalo and the second volume offers information on Native relations during wartime.  

Secondary scholarship on the War of 1812 does not seem to have been produced with regularity until the 1980s, and the two publications (one American and one Canadian) that are still repeatedly referenced as staples of the field were originally published during this decade. Alongside Hickey’s renowned The War of 1812: A Forgotten War, there is preeminent Canadian author and historian Pierre Berton’s duet of The Invasion of Canada: 1812–1813 and Flames Across the Border: 1813–1814, which were originally published in 1980 and 1981, respectively, and which are now available in a combined edition titled Pierre Berton’s War of 1812. Both Hickey and Berton provide an extensive overview of the war, and reading the two in tandem works well to contrast an American coverage of the war to a Canadian one and solidify their coverage. It is a rare recent publication which does not acknowledge Hickey and Berton, and both men deserve the acclaim, as their texts still provide a solid foundational knowledge of the War of 1812.

Over the last fifteen years, there has been a marked upswing in the publication of secondary scholarship materials dealing with this war, most likely owing to an increased public interest stirred up by the coming of its bicentennial. This period has seen the creation of the Journal of the War of 1812 and the War of 1812 Magazine. Brock University has created a publicly accessible, searchable digital repository of their War of 1812 collection. This site gives one access to magazines, newspapers, letters, sermons, military documents, images, and

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34 The third and forth volumes are a who’s who of the region, and would be of interest to those studying this region later into the nineteenth century.
sundry other items. And Library and Archives Canada has created War of 1812 exhibits and resource sections, focusing in part on images, including an onsite exhibit entitled “Faces of 1812,” and a War of 1812 focused Flickr account.37

Edward Skeen’s *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* is devoted to the American militia men, giving one an insight into the mindset of the men who were giving their service – sometimes willingly, sometimes not – to their country in competition and coordination with the American standing military. George Sheppard’s *Plunder, Profit and Paroles* does effectively the same thing for the Canadian militia. It also provides excellent, detailed information about the food shortages being experienced in Canada during this time, and just what it cost to care for and feed the bodies needed to wage war. This situation, which is also experienced to varying degrees by the Americans and the Natives, feeds into the burdens born by those civilians left behind to manage for themselves when feeding those who could fight was seen as the top priority.

Alan Taylor’s *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* offers a text framed by the borderlands of the conflict, putting forth the idea that the War of 1812 was not a war waged between foreign countries, but a fight that firmly and finally created two nations out of the British lands in North America. Ann Dirking Keating’s *Rising Up From Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago* is a spiritually similar text, exploring the close-knit personal relationships that developed among people of American, British, Canadian, and Native origin in the Great Lakes Region and how interpersonal relationships could be prioritized over international enmities.

In terms of secondary sources which deal with the Native Americans and Canadians, particularly in the western Great Lakes, John Sugden’s *Tecumseh’s Last Stand* and Sandy

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Antal’s *A Wampum Denied: Procter’s War of 1812* both offer a nuanced treatment of the Natives, acknowledging them as more than just chess pieces in a white man’s war.38 These texts give Native people an agency of their own and serve as a reminder that even though the Natives may have chosen to side with Great Britain or the United States, their goals and desires were their own, typically overlapping but not fully aligning with those of white men. For consideration of the Canadian side of the border, Arthur Ray’s *I Have Lived Here since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada’s Native People* gives a long term overview of the relationship that has exited between Natives and whites, from the early days of European settlement. Roger L. Nichols’ *Indians in the United States and Canada: A Comparative History* explores the differing strategies used by whites in the United State and in Canada to approach their Native populations during this time period, which illuminates why many tribes originally allied with Great Britain.39 Britain’s relationship with Natives is also expanded upon in Colin Calloway’s “The End of an Era: British-Indian Relations in the Great Lakes Region after the War of 1812” and Robert Allen’s “His Majesty’s Indian Allies: Native Peoples, the British Crown and the War of 1812” both of which received publication in the *Michigan Historical Review* and cover the interplay of Native people and the British in the western Great Lakes.

Absences and Explanations

In addition to the above, my bibliography has a more complete record of source materials which I drew from to craft this thesis. However, there are still areas of interest which I have not found covered in my sources. The sources I found have not largely discussed incidents of rape or

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other sexual violence against women in this the Great Lakes. Rape was most certainly a fear and occurrence during the War of 1812 and it is a subject that is addressed in detail in coverage of the raid on Hampton, Virginia and of the Battle of New Orleans. Similarly, though blacks were active in the war, they are only rarely mentioned in my sources. Also absent from my sources are the voices of Native women; though I am able to discuss their actions, I am unable to consider their thoughts and feelings as I am thanks to the published diaries, journals, and letters of white women. All of these are topics for further study, but presently fall outside the scope or availability of sources considered by this thesis.

Furthermore, it must also be mentioned that during this time period, children were quite often placed in the same category as women – especially as both were viewed as being vulnerable and as possessions – and treated as an extension of women. Therefore, women and children are often written about in tandem. And, though my best efforts were made to identify the women about whom I am writing by their full names, maiden names included, in an effort to

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40 However, there are accounts which indicate that Native women were feared as sexually aggressive, and white male captives claimed to be violently disquieted at the thought that they might be forced to marry and copulate with a Native woman. See: Elias Darnall, “A Journal, Containing an accurate & interesting account of the hardships, sufferings, battles, Defeat, & captivity of those heroic Kentucky Volunteers & Regulars, commanded by General Winchester, in the year 1812... 1813. Also Two Narratives, by Men, that were Wounded in the Battles on the River Raisin, and Taken Captive by the Indians,” in The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captives, Volume 33, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978). There are also much earlier examples, such as in this March 1757 account from James Smith: “I went in company with a young Caughnewaga, who was about sixteen or seventeen years of age, Chinnohete by name, in order to gather cranberries. As he was gathering berries at some distance from me, three Jibewa Squaws crept up undiscovered, and made at him speedily, but he nimbly escaped, and came to me apparently terrified. I asked him what he was afraid of? He replied, did you not see those squaws? I told him I did, and they appeared to be in a very good humour. I asked him, wherefore then he was afraid of them? He said, the Jibewa squaws were very bad women, and had a very ugly custom among them…. He said, that when two or three of them could catch a young lad, that was betwixit a man and a boy, out by himself, if they could overpower him, they would strip him by force in order to see whether he was coming on to be a man or not. He said that was what they intended when they crawled up, and ran so violently at him; but said he, I am very glad that I so narrowly escaped.” James Smith, An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith, in Visions of the Western Reserve: Public and Private Documents of Northwestern Ohio, 1750-1860, ed. Robert A. Wheeler (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 33.

41 Michael L. Dixon has written An Investigation of a Slave Woman’s Role in the Defense of Elkton during the War of 1812 (Elkton, Maryland: The Historic Elk Landing Foundation, 2011) about Hetty Boulden’s role in protecting Elkton, Maryland from the British.
give them an identity beyond being someone’s wife or mother, this was not also possible. Therefore, many of them have had to be identified solely by their married status and husband’s or father’s name.

Conclusion

Graves has rightly subtitled her work *The Untold Story of Women in the War of 1812*. Even in light of the upsurge in scholarship that has been fueled by the War of 1812’s bicentennial, the above is a solid summation of the scholarship which has been produced on women in this war. Despite the passage of more than two centuries since the war was fought, the contributions of women to this conflict have been explored only in a scant handful of articles and other resources and one book. With *Rhetoric and Realities: Women, Gender, and War during the War of 1812 in the Great Lakes Region*, I add to this short list.
CHAPTER ONE: GENDER PERCEPTIONS LEADING INTO THE WAR OF 1812

The War of 1812 occurred during a time period when the “cult of true womanhood” was a recent concept and its ramifications for society were still being discovered. Middle- and upper-class white society in North America had only recently hardened “into public and private spheres, each the province of one sex.”¹ Men were supposed to dominate the public space and control politics, religion, and paid work while women were delegated to the privacy of domestic life. Attempts to reinforce and naturalize the emerging gender separation led to women’s participation in the Revolutionary War being downplayed and eventually forgotten, which created a situation in which men could assume that women would not be able to be active participants in the War of 1812.

Women’s Forgotten Roles in the Revolutionary War

Lincoln Diamont, in his introduction to a republication of Elizabeth Ellet’s 1848 The Women of the American Revolution, wrote that during the American Revolution “only a handful of the approximately 800,000 adult females living in what soon became thirteen united states, ever pulled a musket trigger or helped to serve a cannon.”² However, this by no means indicates that the American Revolution was purely a man’s war. Joan R. Gundersen determined that at least “200,000 women served in regularly recognized positions with the army; a few hundred more enlisted and served in units, and a much larger number took part in the defence of their communities.”³ These women “made no commissioning or enlistment vows. What kept them

³ Joan R. Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 192; Linda Grant De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1998), 123-124. There are two Revolutionary War veterans buried at West Point; one of whom is Margaret Corbin, had enlisted and served openly under her own name and gender. Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 193-194.
with the army was their desire to be near loved ones, to support themselves, and/or, in some cases, to share in the adventure.” Women’s sense of duty and patriotism was equally strong as compared with their male counterparts, though they had to find alternate ways to exercise them.

And unofficially, there were thousands more who simply “became refugees before the British advance [and] went along with the patriot army, washed, mended, and cooked for the men.” A British intelligence report dated 11 August 1778 claimed that “the Women and Waggoners make up near the half of their Army,” and the number of camp followers accumulated by the America army was typically less than that which traveled with the British and their Hessian allies. General George Washington came to see women and children as “a clog upon every movement,” and he ultimately issued orders demanding that women refrain from riding in supply wagons. These were issued, ignored, and reissued throughout the war.

Despite any aggravation women might have caused, the American army did not ultimately enforce quota regulations or other restrictions upon them as strongly as did the British. This was a byproduct of the American desire to have “a unified army of virtuous volunteers, not companies of subjects.” Washington feared that his men could easily desert if they were not permitted to have their wives accompany them to provide company and labor.

On the home front, women melted down the family pewter for musket balls, spun and wove cloth to create uniforms and bandages, took up the farm work, from planting to harvesting, ran businesses, delivered supplies, and ministered to the sick and injured. Female informants

4 Holly A. Mayer, Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 5.
6 Quoted in Mayer, Belonging to the Army, 1.
7 De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies, 120.
8 Mayer, Belonging to the Army, 3; De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies, 120.
9 Blumenthal, Women in America, 57. The 1814 eulogy for brothel keeper Mrs. Mary Jones, who had also gone by Polly Miller, thanked her for “her services in behalf of her country during the struggle for independence…. 
were used by both Great Britain and the future United States. In fact, the spread of information by females eventually became such a problem that regulations were passed by the United States that forbade women who entered army camps beyond certain points from exiting again.\textsuperscript{10} There were also women who, in disguise, enlisted themselves on both sides of the conflict, and even some who had been able to serve openly.\textsuperscript{11}

Not all of the experiences had by women were positive or productive. Women left home alone might be rendered politically vulnerable, judged by their husband’s choices. In Chester County, Pennsylvania, Mary Warrall’s husband, Major Persifer Frazer, stridently supported the American cause. Knowing that this could make her a target to those who were loyal to Britain, Frazer had preemptively begun removing valuables from her home to hide them in the woods and gardens surrounding it. When the British did eventually target the Warralls, she sent away her four children, a servant, and three slaves and stayed alone to berate the British soldiers.\textsuperscript{12}

There was a marked economic and social contrast between the women of the army and the “ladies” of the regiment. While women of the common classes cooked and washed, elite women sometimes accompanied their husbands looking for leisure pleasures. When Great Britain’s Continental Army traveled to America, the Baroness Frederika Charlotte Riedesel, whose husband was General Friedrich Adolf Riedesel of Brunswick, and a party of other women

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For having naturally a love of freedom and abhorrence of all restraint whatever, she took a decided stand on the side of her country.…. She had often an opportunity of ministering to the wants of her country-men in arms, and offering them aid and comfort whenever an exigency required…. She ordered refreshments for the soldiers after the battle and took charge of the wounded men, whose wounds she dressed and attended to until they were cured. Indeed, it is asserted, that she saved the lives of more than half a dozen.’ Quoted in Sylvia R. Frey and Marian J. Marton. \textit{New World, New Rules: A Documentary History of Women in Pre-Industrial America} (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), 163-164.
\textsuperscript{10} Mayer, \textit{Belonging to the Army}, 38-41.
\textsuperscript{11} De Pauw, \textit{Battle Cries and Lullabies}, 123-124. There are two Revolutionary War veterans buried at West Point, one of whom is Margaret Corbin, who had enlisted and served openly under her own name and gender. Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 193-194.
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went with them because they wanted an opportunity to vacation in New York.\textsuperscript{13} The wives of American officers, however, were not as likely to follow after their husbands on the march. More often, they stayed home until the army had established its winter quarters and then joined their husbands for the season.\textsuperscript{14}

But women on both sides of the Revolutionary War “assumed additional responsibilities in domestic production and family defence-duties that became politically charged.”\textsuperscript{15} Neutrality was hard to maintain because “both Continental and British forces pressured women not only to choose a side but also to support it. In making a choice, women, though civilians, became not just targets but also essentially combatants. Neither civilian status nor their female gender preserved them from the burdens of war. Domestic life was too interwoven with the public conflict to be sacrosanct.”\textsuperscript{16} However, despite all of this, Gundersen explains that “memories of the American Revolution and Women’s participation in it would be distorted by the lenses of domesticity through which their generation and later ones would see the world.”\textsuperscript{17} The creation of an ideology emphasizing public and private spheres of influence, separated by gender, caused women’s wartime contributions to be reinterpreted and eventually forgotten.

\textbf{Inner Sphere, Outer Invisibility}

This concept of separate spheres gained prevalence throughout the nineteenth-century in the western world, but it had been in development since 1700, and it only came into its stride during the decades of the 1730s and 1740s. Previously, social status had played a greater role in

\textsuperscript{13} Peggy Dymond Leavy, \textit{Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812} (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 23.
\textsuperscript{14} Mayer, \textit{Belonging to the Army}, 15. William Hull’s wife, Sarah Fuller Hull, was one of the women who followed her husband to camp. At Saratoga, she and the other United States Army officers’ wives cared for the British prisoners of war. Diamont, \textit{Revolutionary Women in the War for American Independence}, 39.
\textsuperscript{16} Mayer, “Bearing Arms, Bearing Burdens,” 170.
\textsuperscript{17} Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 216.
determining who held power within both the home and the state. Mary Beth Norton writes that individuals with wealth and status, whether male and female, “led society and policy, and ordinary folks of both sexes were expected to defer to them.”

Social standing carried power that could trump gender.

By 1790, “work,” especially paid labor, became a thing of the public sphere while the private sphere – the home – was designated a place of “retreat and nurture.” It was expected that men would develop “a public life and world, while women cultivated a network of female friends in the private garden of the home.”

Ignoring the recent past, women were supposed to move away from being sometime partner and helpmate toward holder of virtue and morality in “a new worldview based on sentiment and the notion of home as a private space.” They had to learn and perform the new gender roles which “developed within their racial-ethnic and class groups and historical period.”

The generation who lived through the American Revolution first reorganized women’s roles in society to start regulating them to the domestic sphere. Gundersen says that in the post-revolutionary United States, “new courtship patterns, companionate marriage, rising literacy, and a growing sense that women were different from men opened the way to reshaping norms for women by destabilizing relations with men.” Increasingly, emphasis was placed on the sentiment, maternity, and virtue that women were suited to, and on how different they were from men, who were meant for active, outside roles. Women were supposed to have the leadership

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19 Ibid., 153.
20 Ibid., 59; 59-65.
22 Ibid., 171.
role within the family that men had within the nation. To conform to expectations, women began “spending more time on domestic house-wifery, childcare, and female friendships…, abandoned commercial credit transactions and withdrew from public forums to a private domestic world.” However, women also found agency from their domestic isolation.

In the United States, the concept of republican motherhood emerged for middle- and upper-class white women. It permitted these women a new way to participate in the process of nation building through their sentiment, maternity, and virtue and from the privacy of their homes. It was a concept adopted and encouraged in Canada too. In York, Upper Canada, Bishop John Strachan’s 1810 Discourse on the Character of King George the Third reminded women that they would be most patriotic and loyal and do the most good for their nation by maintaining “their absence from affairs of state and public life in general.” This was fitting, since the concept of separate gender spheres was used politically by men who claimed masculine power for themselves while casting doubt on the authenticity of their opponent’s claims of masculine power, and thus their political legitimacy. But the concept of separate spheres of gender influence did not just have political ramifications. Cecelia Morgan explained that “the metaphor of separate spheres wielded considerable power in shaping the legal, political, social, and economic structures that affected their subjects’ lives, however much it was contradicted and complicated by other factors.” And contradicted and complicated it was.

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23 Norton, Separated by Their Sex, 99.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Quoted in Morgan, Public Men and Virtuous Women, 31.
27 Ibid., 7.
28 Ibid., 10.
Marriage, for example, provided women with “protection and respectability,” and, through reiteration of the sanctity of marriage, it also became a way to increase family stability. But marriage also cost women their ability to publicly contribute to the economy. A woman was required by propriety, and sometimes policy, to work in the home “within the context of the family.” This meant that she found her “activities defined by her husband’s activities,” and her work determined by how many young children she had, whether the farm was short-handed, or whether her husband needed her to take in mending or washing to help him make ends meet. Marriage took a woman’s public identity from her because husband and wife were considered one person under the law and that person was the husband.

Once married, women still firmly “participated in the economy but usually in the shadow of their husband’s legal status, making their participation much harder to discern” because their labor was usually neither remunerated nor recorded in the public record. There is evidence to suggest that as late as 1783, “women were at least as involved in farming as men,” and there is little to suggest that there was any dramatic change in women’s economic participation over the next three decades. So, “although women worked at the same tasks in the nineteenth century, the interpretation of women’s roles after 1790 limited recognition of their economic contributions.” In both Canada and the United States, women’s participation became seen as merely a side product of the work they did to manage their domestic affairs. The lives of women did not differ

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31 Ibid., 92.
32 Gundersen, *To Be Useful to the World*, 68.
33 Ibid., 69; 67.
significantly after separate spheres ideology gained acceptance, but rhetoric had changed the way people thought and spoke about them.\textsuperscript{34}

The same phenomenon took place regarding women’s contribution to the Revolutionary War. The very thing that had made women’s contribution to the Revolutionary War unavoidable – the fact that “domestic life was too interwoven with the public conflict to be sacrosanct” - was also the thing which allowed it to be viewed as unremarkable.\textsuperscript{35} Largely, women’s participation in the war constituted so called “ordinary actions” and thus there had been no need to delineate “family, religion, childrearing, or their daily chores from political action.”\textsuperscript{36} Then, as the home was reinvented “as a private space infused with piety and nurture, separate from politics,” the notion that such work could be politically charged at all lessened.\textsuperscript{37} The ability to “see the public nature of women’s lives during the Revolution” narrowed and discussions of women as purposeful participants of the war gradually disappeared from the historical record.\textsuperscript{38}

It is also important to keep in mind that warfare called for a strengthening of gender ideology.\textsuperscript{39} War asks men to continually assert their valiance and they are forcibly reminded that manhood is something which can be lost if not routinely “performed, repeated, and naturalized.”\textsuperscript{40} If women could take part in warfare themselves, then manhood also becomes something that could be stolen. If “it was difficult to reconcile a belief that women are naturally dependent, gentle, and domestic with the reality of women who took up arms during the

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\textsuperscript{35} Mayer, “Bearing Arms, Bearing Burdens,” 170.
\textsuperscript{36} Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 199.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Revolution,” then it was even harder to accept the idea that women could intrude into men’s gender roles.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, according to Mayer, women “assuming male clothing and a male identity in the military sphere was one thing, performing female domestic roles in camp another, and taking on male duties within the domestic sphere yet another.”\textsuperscript{42} Women who maintained, or quickly returned to, their private sphere infringed upon and disordered male social standing the least, and, thus, could be tolerated the most.\textsuperscript{43}

Subsequently, the roles which women had performed during the war were reinterpreted to make them more palatable. If the majority of their service could come to be seen as women’s work, related to their “proper” maternal role, then it could become “not really work but rather, a ‘natural’ activity that required no special skill and (many seemed to presume) took little effort.”\textsuperscript{44} Their service became maternal rather than political:

Mary Hayes, the regimental woman paid to bring water to cool artillery, became Molly Pitcher, risking death to bring water to her thirsty husband. The female nurses so necessary to military hospitals disappeared from view… [because] women’s supposed gentleness and domesticity had unsuited them for places as shocking as a battlefront hospital.\textsuperscript{45}

When \textit{The Women of the American Revolution}, the first history of women in the Revolutionary War, was published by Elizabeth Ellet in 1848, women’s “many forms of activism resurfaced as momentary acts of heroism motivated by appropriate domestic and patriotic concerns.”\textsuperscript{46}

Ultimately, Ellet observed, it was expected that men could and should be judged by their public actions, but that “a women’s sphere, on the other hand is secluded, and in very few instances does her personal history even though she may fill a conspicuous position, afford

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\textsuperscript{41} Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 192.
\textsuperscript{42} Mayer, “Bearing Arms, Bearing Burdens,” 181, 171.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Errington, \textit{Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids}, xiii; 20; Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 192-193.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 216-217.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
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sufficient incident to throw a strong light upon her character. To the history books, their existence was passed for the most part in a quiet round of domestic duties!" Because of the new gender standards enforced by the generation of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 took place during a time when patriotism and loyalty were gendered qualities. The activities of soldiers and militiamen were publicly highlighted as being courageous displays of patriotic duty. But, in order to conform to their expected gender roles, men had to assume that women would be virtuous and maternal, victims in need of protection, despite the historically recent occurrences of the Revolutionary War which should have suggested otherwise. Consequently, women’s participation in the War of 1812 would be strongly influenced by changing gender roles.

Conclusion

These gender roles could not be established uniformly across the United States and Canada. Poverty, death, and other hardships necessitated women to do paid labor and sometimes work outside of the home, which meant that black women and poor and rural white women did not have the luxury of acting like “proper” women. Furthermore, this belief system was produced by people of European heritage yet being prescribed even to peoples outside of their culture. The Native people of Canada and the United States had social norms that allowed women to have active public lives and participate in work that was not domestic, challenging the gender expectations set by whites. These conflicting concepts of gender boundaries during peacetime only became more apparent during times of war, when gender boundaries were stressed, causing gender anxiety and creating a backlash in which gender roles are more strongly enforced. The

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47 From the author’s 1848 preface, quoted in Diamont, *Revolutionary Women in the War for American Independence*, 16.
next chapter examines the “nonconforming” gender roles of the Native peoples and the part that gender was supposed to play in structuring warfare.
CHAPTER TWO: WHITES AND NATIVES: NOTIONS OF GENDER AND WARFARE

The gender roles that existed for middle-class and elite whites in the years following the Revolutionary War did not mesh with gender norms in all cultures across the North American continent. The idea of the virtuous wife who “kept the home, raised the children, and provided the food and clothing needed for daily subsistence” while men managed all of the “heavy outdoor chores” excluded white women from poor families who were forced to take up men’s work in addition to their domestic duties.¹ This gender ideal “seemed designed to exclude slave women, who could neither protect their own virtue nor prevent a separation from children.”² But it was also a concept that encouraged the nearly wholesale exclusion of Native women and reinforced the idea of Native women and Native society in general as “the other,” suggesting that Natives were incompatible of being “civilized” even during daily life and making them seem more threatening when put into a situation of inelastic gender roles such as war.

Many Native societies gave room for women to have positions of significant political and economic power, and they allowed women to do labor that was incompatible with what the whites thought was acceptable. Such “backwardness” was suspected of other elements of Native society as well. Real and imagined clashes between the European and Native styles of warfare made white men predisposed to assume that their women would be in particular danger from Natives during times of war.

The “Nonconforming” Gender Roles of the Native Peoples

The Native populations living alongside the European Americans had gender roles that perplexed and disturbed the white men. Only Native women seemed to engage in actual work.

Hunting and fishing, which were the purview of Native men, were regarded as leisure activities rather than labor. “Their wives are their slaves,” wrote Captain Christopher Levett, a British explorer who traveled present-day New England in 1623-1624, “and do all the work; the men will do nothing but kill beasts, fish, etc.” Native men also seemed overly fond of “wantonly burning the woods” for no obvious practical reason. Meanwhile, it was women, alongside children and men too aged to hunt or fish who were responsible for planting, tending, and harvesting crops. According to whites, men who made their wives do the men’s work of farming while they engaged in only the leisure activities of hunting and fishing were lazy. Worse, however, they were forcing their women into work which made them appear “unwomanly.”

Similar observations were made as time passed and white settlements moved westward. John Johnson, who had close contact with Natives in his many years as an Indian Agent in the United States Northwest Territory, wrote the following after his 1829 retirement about the gender roles he observed among the Natives:

I was not aware that it could be made a question among reading and intelligent persons whether the condition of females among Savages could in any manner be compared to those in Civilized life. I believe almost all those who have spent much of their time among the Native American Indians are of the opinion that nothing can be more degrading servile or menial than the condition of their families in the married State. Johnson went on to explain that,

the duties of the females among our Indians are certainly more laborious than those which appertain to the males. The women build the camps, cut the fire wood and carry it on their backs, prepare the skins of the animals, cook the foods, do all the Trading, bartering &c. The Chase and War pursuits are not considered degrading or laborious, it is

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5 Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 13.  
6 Ibid., 170-171.
the highest glory and ambition of the men and when attended with success are constant themes of their oratory and song.

While Johnson was willing to acknowledge that the Native women were treated well enough, when one factors in “the moral and intellectual condition of the Indians,” he, overall, felt that “there is to be found among the men none of that sympathy affection and kindness towards their women which characterizes the marriage state with us.”\(^7\) Furthermore, there was not to be found among the Native men any of the enterprising spirit and work ethic which should be characterize of men in their public sphere personae.

But the European derision did not take into consideration that such a lifestyle had been conceived so that women performed the “jobs which were most compatible with simultaneous child-care. This meant tasks which were generally repetitive, which could be easily interrupted, which did not suffer if one performed them while giving most of one’s attention to the children.”\(^8\) Therefore, Native women did what white men saw as men’s work to better accomplish childrearing, a responsibility given to women in many cultures. Women plowed, planted, and harvested their crops, as well as doing whatever supplemental gathering work their locality allowed for, such as collecting berries, nuts, and shellfish, for example. This meant that women’s work was also regional and seasonal. Women living in less fertile coastal regions might spend more time gathering shellfish and bird eggs along the shore than they did tending the fields.\(^9\)

These gender roles were not readily challenged from first contact with Europeans.

According to Joan Gundersen, “as long as furs or deerskins were the center of Indian-European

\(^7\) John Johnson to Benjamin Drake, 30 March 1833, in Willa G. Cromton, Women Beyond the Frontier: A Distaff View of Life at Fort Wayne (Fort Wayne: Lincoln Printing Corp., 1977), 27.

\(^8\) Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 44. It should be noted that the Natives found their way of life to be practical, and judged as foolish white men who did not ask their women to help with labor-intensive tasks like farm work. Ibid., 52.

\(^9\) Ibid., 44.
relations,” such divisions of labor did not often come under attack. But eventually the depletion of game and the expansion of European settlements necessitated a change. By the 1780s, the Great Lakes Region had become a target for new Americans wanting to expand their nation. This was, Robert Walker claims, because “the Indians who had sided with the French and then the British were on the defensive,” and the former colonists who were now United States citizens believed that the far-flung nature and seasonal occupation of Native villages “signified the area was not really occupied – and therefore not owned.” It was a resource waiting to be properly used, turned into farmland and townships, despite treaties which promised its continued use as hunting and fishing grounds. As a result, “missionary efforts became more assimilationist, insisting that men become farmers, asserting male headship of families, and teaching Indian women domestic duties.” Indoctrinating Native men into a new, time consuming form of labor might also serve to distract them from the territories that had been taken from them.

Thus, according to Cecelia Morgan, “the languages of religion, manners, and mores shaped and deployed categories of virtuous manhood and womanhood that were of particular importance in attempts to colonize indigenous peoples, to reform and regulate gender relations in

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10 Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 158.
12 Kentuckian Elias Darnall commented on the state of the land while he was serving the militia in Ohio: “I trust this country was designed for a more noble purpose than to be a harbor for those rapacious savages, whose manners and department are not more elevated than the ravenous beasts of the forest. I view the time not far distant, when this country will be interspersed with elegant farms and flourishing towns, and be inhabited by a free and independent people under an auspicious republic.” Elias Darnall, A Journal 10 November 1812 “A Journal, Containing an accurate & interesting account of the hardships, sufferings, battles, Defeat, & captivity of those heroic Kentucky Volunteers & Regulars, commanded by General Winchester, in the year 1812… 1813. Also Two Narratives, by Men, that were Wounded in the Battles on the River Raisin, and Taken Captive by the Indians,” in The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captives, Volume 33, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), 23.
13 Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 158.
Native societies to resemble those of Europeans.”\textsuperscript{14} But, as Clifford Geertz says, “culture is public because meaning is.”\textsuperscript{15} Geertz proposes that a society’s cultural elements should “best [be] seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions… - for the governing of behavior.”\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, the Natives needed to be reeducated to learn how work should be divided along gender lines as defined by influential white in Canada and the United States. Attempts were made to educate Native women on how to do women’s work – spinning, weaving, sewing – and Native men how to farm, how to be proper women and men in the white way.

Natives were advised by George Washington “not to make hunting our principal occupation; but to direct our attention to the extension and cultivation of our corn fields, the increase of our cattle, the learning the useful arts; and that our females should acquire skill in spinning, and in the manufacturing of cloth.”\textsuperscript{17} Chief Cornplanter’s Seneca village was visited by whites desiring to show the men how to plow and do blacksmith work and the women how to spin.\textsuperscript{18} And Thomas Jefferson introduced a “civilization” program targeting Natives in the west that sought to introduce farming as a male activity in order to engage warriors in laborious work that would tie them down to one location in a way that their nomadic hunting did not.\textsuperscript{19} To Main Poc, the Potawatomi chief of the southwest Great Lakes Area, it seemed “evident that the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{17} Selukuki Wohhellengh, a close Cherokee friend of John Norton who was speaking for his people, found it odd that the Natives would be advised to give up hunting for farming, only for Americans to come asking them for their farm land: “We could never have supposed that you would think of asking us for more land; as thereby you render inconsistent, the advice of your late Beloved Man.” Selukuki Wohhellengh (serving as speaker for the Cherokee) to General John Sevier, quoted in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816}, ed. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1970), 123-124.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 9.
President intended making women of the Indians,” as adopting the gender roles prescribed by white men meant reversing their own cultural norms.20

Gender Based Neutrality in Warfare

But there was a much more dangerous element of the Native people’s ignorance of European gender norms. Not only were women supposed to occupy a specific, domestic part of ordinary life, they were supposed to occupy a protected position in times of war. And it was assumed that if the Natives did not understand how gender should be a basis to divide work, they also did not know how gender roles were supposed to extend to warfare.

Europeans had developed a lengthy history of scholarship that reinforced that women, children, and civilians in general should be shielded from warfare. Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez, for instance, believed that it is “implicit in natural law that the innocent include children, women, and all unable to bear arms,” and that those who could not bear arms should not have arms turned against them.21 Hugo Grotius, in his 1625 *Law of War and Peace* said that women should have “absolute immunity from attack if they commit no crime ‘unless they take the place of men.’”22 And in his 1758 *The Law of Nations*, Emerich von Vattel admitted that, “women, children, feeble old men, and the sick are to be counted among the enemy,” but that they were “enemies who offer no resistance, and consequently the belligerent has no right to maltreat or otherwise offer violence to them, much less to put them to death.” Vattel maintained that no nation could claim to be civilized if it did not “observe this rule of justice and humanity.”23

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20 Quoted in Ibid., 83.
23 Quoted in Ibid., 108.
But while Great Britain and the United States went to war under codes of conduct that dictated the proper treatment of civilians, many whites believed that Native people “did not observe the code of honorable conduct and manly self-control.”

Instead, Gundersen says whites assumed that Natives “recognized no noncombatants. During attacks, Indians killed women and children, along with those unsuitable as prisoners or who could not keep up with the raiding party.” Instead of targeting the proper enemy, they would hone in on the easiest target, and “the most vulnerable among the enemy would suffer the most,” because they were not capable of defending against an unexpected attack.

So, the white inhabitants of British North America saw their conflicts with the Native peoples as a battle between their own “form of ‘civilized’ warfare and the ‘primitive’ warfare of the Indians,” or, as De Pauw claims, “the old-fashioned combination of ritual and sport, which did not last any longer than tempers stayed hot and in which relatively few people were killed.”

The Natives favored a guerilla style of warfare that has been called “the skulking way of war.” This mode of action used raiding and ambush attacks which “often dissolve the distinction between soldier and civilian,” and seemed juxtaposed to the “orderly” European way of waging war.

However, popular treatises on codes of civilized war acknowledged the possibility of having to fight against such an “uncivilized” opponent. Vattel also said that when “we are at war with a savage nation, who observe no rules, we may punish then in the person of any of their

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24 Morgan, Public Men and Virtuous Women, 33.
25 Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 183.
26 Hartigan, The Forgotten Victim, 17.
27 De Pauw believes that the Europeans “was a far more lethal activity with long-range goals, including the appropriation of land, did not understand the cultural assumptions supporting Indian warfare and concluded they had no rules.” As with their gendered distribution of labor, the Europeans looked at something they did not have a cultural understanding of and assumed it was the produce of a broken system. Linda Grant De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 1998), 110.
28 Starkey, “Wartime Colonial America,” 5.
people whom we take.”

The English had practice in fighting an “inhuman” opponent: the Irish. They had employed scorched earth tactics against Ireland, and transitioned them to fighting in British North America. And Pierre de Rigaud, the Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal, the Governor General of New France from 1755 to 1760, “directly encouraged attacks on [British] civilians as the only possible strategy against a larger and potentially more powerful opponent” during the Seven Years’ War. Believing that the Native people were not capable of “civilized” warfare absolved Great Britain and the United States from having to wage a “civilized” war against them.

Ironically, the European style of warfare was also found to be morally bankrupt by Natives. In his autobiography, Black Hawk offered harsh criticism of European techniques, which he thought were vainglorious and wasteful:

Instead of stealing upon each other, and taking every advantage to kill the enemy and save their own people, as we do, (which, with us is considered good policy in a war chief,) they march out, in open daylight, and fight, regardless of the number of warriors they may lose! After the battle is over, they retire to feast, and drink wine, as if nothing had happened; after which, they make a statement in writing, of what they have done – each party claiming the victory! and neither giving an account of half the number that have been killed on their own side…. Those chiefs would do to paddle a canoe, but not to steer it.

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31 Despite this, the United States and Great Britain each felt that the other nation had a responsibility to keep their Native allies from engaging in “uncivilized” warfare against them. An investigative report produced by the House of Representatives in 1814 concluded that, “That these outrages were perpetrated by Indians is neither palliation nor excuse. Every civilized nation is responsible for the conduct of the allies under their command, and while they partake of the advantages of their success, they are equally partaking of the odium of their crimes.” Barbarities of the Enemy, Exposed in a Report of the Committee of the House of Representatives of the United States, Appointed to Enquire into the Spirit and Manner in Which the War Has Been Waged By the Enemy and the Documents Accompanying Said Report (Worcester: Isaac Sturtevant, 1814), 8.

Black Hawk also dismissed the idea of targeting civilians during warfare as being an act of extreme cowardliness: “I never thought it brave, but cowardly, to kill an unarmed and helpless enemy!”\(^{33}\) Similarly, Major John Norton, the Mohawk chief, documented two incidents that cast shame upon the army and militia of the United States for firing indiscriminately upon unarmed women and children.

In his journal, Norton recounted a story told to him by an old hunter about a time when he accompanied Brigadier General Charles Scott and a group of 800 men to attack “Wyat Town, generally called Ouiyatanon” on 1 June 1791. The man recalled that, “we killed several of the men who were obstinate, and would not surrender, - some of the women in attempting to save themselves by crossing the River, were shot by some of our worthless fellows. We took a number of women and children prisoners, and brought them in with us.” And in a story told to Norton by Selukukigh Wohellengh, the Tennessee Militia, “guided by a worthless Mestif [a half-blooded Cherokee],” was shamed for firing indiscriminately on men, women, and children.\(^{34}\)

According the De Pauw, Natives modified their methods of war in response to what they saw as the brutal, careless nature of European warfare, creating a situation where both societies fought as if they were against an unrestrained opponent.\(^{35}\) This was further complicated by the fact that “most wars between 1775 and 1830 were struggles over the very existence of old and

\(^{34}\) Ouiatenon was a Wea settlement located along the Wabash River in the region of present-day Tippecanoe County, Indiana. The Publications of the Champlain Society: The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816, 23; 39.

For all the ways in which they had wronged the Natives, Norton did credit Europeans with creating a greater sense of intertribal unity. He believed that fighting against white men had “taught them to appreciate their own people and it had inspired them more effectually with a spirit of Union, instead of the fury with which every Petty Tribe burred for the destruction of each other,” and, further, he thought that the arrival of Europeans could have been fully beneficial “had these only been half as zealous in spreading the Light of the Gospel, as they have been indefatigable to gratify their avarice.” The Publications of the Champlain Society: The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816, 47-48.

\(^{35}\) De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies, 111.
new states and nations, legitimized by new powerful political ideologies” which, according to Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall, made it far more likely that “the civilian population became a military target as armies aimed for an annihilating victory over the enemy.”36 And, in British North America, the great crop of colonial wars tended to happen because the borderlines of settlements crossed. The nature of early conflicts towards increased civilian involvement made warfare local and personal as well as national.37

During the American Revolution, “on balance… prisoners, property, and privilege were treated according to the accepted rules of warfare. Civilians were generally protected and neutrality was usually respected.”38 However, there were also elements to the Revolution, fought on American territory, which confused the notion of who civilians were and further muddied the concept of properly civilized warfare. For example, American rebels adopted strategies that involved ambushing enemies from behind rocks, walls, and trees rather than fighting in formal battle line, and, since they often lacked uniforms, American combatants could be indistinguishable from the general population.39 The American forces had themselves adopted the tactics of the uncivilized. If war against or alongside the Native peoples could bring one civilized nation to engage in dishonorable warfare against another, then how could a society with a culture of uncivilized warfare be shown the error of its ways? Going into the War of 1812, it was believed that the Native people of Canada and the United States did not properly understand how civilized warfare, including proper gender roles, were supposed to preside over civil society.


38 Starkey, “Wartime Colonial America,” 110.

39 Ibid.
Therefore, it was largely thought that Natives would not be easily able to uphold European standards of warfare that cast women as a protected portion of the population. Thus white women were specifically at risk from the Natives during the war.

**Conclusion**

Although Native societies also tended to divide work along gender lines, they did so in a way that was not in agreement with the gender expectations held by Europeans. Because Native gender roles were different, and a product of “uncivilized” societies, they were dismissed by white men as being backwards and ineffective and the unassimilated Native civilization was perceived as a threat to the safety of white society. Next we will examine the rhetoric that encouraged, spread, and purportedly confirmed these beliefs, creating a culture of fear that made the War of 1812 seem like a specific threat to white women and “civilized” warfare seem to be impossible.
CHAPTER THREE: MALE RHETORIC: FEARS BOTH ESTABLISHED AND CONFIRMED

During the War of 1812 many white men in Canada and the United States believed that war posed gender-based dangers to women and obligations to men. These perceived dangers and obligations had a profound impact, as they were used as justification for many of the decisions white military leaders made leading up to and during the war. Women’s safety was cited in military decision-making as a reason for fighting and for deciding not to fight. However, Natives perceived these gender-based dangers as well and they also believed that war would create situations that would make their women specifically vulnerable. White men – whether American, British, or Canadian – could be just as violent as they assumed the Natives were, and their actions were detrimental to Native and white women alike. Men on all sides of the conflict believed that the War of 1812 was a particular danger to their women, and, thusly, they thought, spoke, and acted accordingly, and, thus, they thought, spoke, and acted according to prevailing notions of gender roles. Gender was central to ways in which the combatants understood this conflict.

In the United States, rumors forecasting an upswing in violence from the nation’s Native population circled through the Western Reserve and made their way to Washington, D.C. in the months leading up to President James Madison’s 18 June 1812 declaration of war. The Native peoples, it was assured, had “assumed a very hostile attitude” and reports from unspecified non-hostile Natives only worked to fortify this fear, indicating that every American would be targeted “by several nations, as soon as the river opens.”1 The spring thaw was forecasted to bring with it certain slaughter.

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From Fort Wayne, Captain James Rhea wrote Captain John Whistler about his fearful belief, based upon “the best information I can get,” that “we shall have a Indian war this spring weather [SIC] we have a British war or not.”

On the other side of the lakes, trepidation was stirred up by the presumed courtship of potential Native allies by the British. The American soldiers in the region spoke of witnessing British officers who plied them with presents and threw open the gates of Fort George to play host for war dances. It was believed that “these things indicate a state of hostility. It is impossible to say when that hostility will commence; a word and a blow will come at the same time.”

Although a war against the British potentially loomed on the horizon, it was the threat of fighting against Native foes that especially fueled fears among men in the Great Lakes region of the United States, as much as the prospect of another fight against the British or the Canadians.

Acts of Native Violence

Among whites, Native peoples were not thought capable of upholding the standards of “civilized” warfare. Chiefly, many whites felt certain that they would not limit their acts of violence to official combatants, but would extend their brutality to civilians and noncombatants. Thus, engaging in warfare against the Natives would be inviting the unconscionable wholesale slaughter of women and children, as well as the invalid and elderly. Such anxieties were pervasive, and not wholly baseless. Natives were indeed resisting white encroachment on their


2 Captain J. Rhea to Captain John Whistler, 14 March 1812, in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. VI: Letters to the Secretary of War, 1812, Relating to the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Part One, transcribed Richard C. Knopf (Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, 1959), 94. Rhea’s statement was made in response to a letter written by John Johnston, who said, “I do not apprehend any further Hostilities with the Indians unless we should have a British war: Should such an Event take place, the Enemy will openly make use of the Indians against us.” “Extract of a Letter from John Johnston Esqr.,” 23 January 1812, in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. III: Thomas Worthington and the War of 1812, transcribed Richard C. Knopf (Columbus: The Anthony Wayne Parkway Board, 1957), 44.

territories, and sometimes lashed out in violent ways. Near Vincennes, Indiana Territory, on 11 April 1812, Mrs. Isaac Hutson and her four children were murdered by Natives, who then set fire to their home on the western bank of the Wabash River, burning their bodies inside. On 21 April, the Mix family, who lived “on little Pidgeon Creek, near the Ohio River in Indiana territory,” was also attacked, with the first blow falling on Mrs. Mix, who had gone outside to collect water. The day after that, the grisly discovery of the Harryman family was made along the bank of the Boak River. Both Mr. and Mrs. Harryman had been shot, tomahawked and scalped. Their “two little daughters, one apparently seven, the other nine years old, [killed] in the same horrid manner, two little twin sons stabbed with their knives and scalped, … and one little daughter about 18 months old… struck on one cheek with the head of a tomahawk, and struck the war hawk in its head.” The family was buried in the wilderness where they fell, so as to spare the “females of the town” from greater alarm.4

Benjamin Whiteman documented the tomahawking of a woman “near the head of lost Creek” and another “shot in the arm by an Indian six miles west of Springfield.”5 Robert Baylor reported that the daughter of Mr. Copus was wounded when a group of Natives attacked a scouting party resting at her father’s home and that two additional women were killed in the same area in the week before the attack on the Copus’ house.6

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4 Originally, the intention had been to bring “them to Vincennes, and having them interred, but for the advice of several persons with me, who thought it would alarm the females of the town too much. I interred them on the ground where they were massacred.” Lieutenant Colonel James Miller to Captain Stephen Ranney, The National Intelligencer, 4 June 1812 in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. V, 83-84. While there are survey records created contemporaneously to the War of 1812 that use the term “boak” as a portmanteau of “black oak,” the author has been unable to locate a “Black Oak River” in the supreme southwest area of Indiana where these events occurred. There is, however, a Black River which is found in the region of present day Gibson County, Indiana, where the Wabash, the Ohio, and Pidgeon Creek all flow. John White, Kankakee River Area Assessment Volume 5: Early Accounts of the Ecology of the Kankakee River Area, Ecological Services, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (1999), 24.


6 Robert Baylor to Return Justice Meigs, 12 September 1812, in Ibid., 50.
In Buffalo, Sally Lovejoy’s death became particularly noteworthy because it created a particularly grisly, striking tableau. “Laid on a bed in a black silk dress, her corpse impressed a boy, who reported: ‘Her long Black hair reached to the Floor clotted with Blood.’” Lovejoy purportedly uttered the prophetic sentence, “when my property goes, my life shall go with it,” before electing to remain in her home to defend her possessions rather than to flee town when invasionary forces arrive. Perhaps operating under the assumption that being female would allow her to do this free from harm, she was tomahawked nevertheless.

The Fort Dearborn “Massacre”

However, out of all such events, the Fort Dearborn massacre probably best exemplified the stereotype of the murderous disposition feared by whites of the Natives. Following the capture of Fort Michilimackinac by the British, General William Hull gave orders for Captain Nathan Heald to abandon Fort Dearborn (also called Fort Chicago) and travel to Fort Wayne, in Indiana Territory, where he believed they would be less at risk. According to Keating, however, “Hull’s orders contradicted the learned experience of the U.S. Army over two decades of Indian war. Among the hard-earned rules for engagement that had evolved was the instruction to stay close to a ‘strong fortified base.’ Abandoning Fort Dearborn flew in the face of this tested tactic.” Despite this, Heald did as he was bid, and readied those under his command – fifty four regulars, twelve militiamen, nine women, and eighteen children – to leave the fort. Captain

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8 Accounts differ slightly, but Lovejoy seems to have been killed after physically confronting a Native man who had entered her home. Quoted in Pierre Berton, *Flames Across the Border: 1813-1814* (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1981), 264-266.
William Wells, an India Agent stationed out of Fort Wayne, who also happened to be Rebekah Heald’s uncle, traveled to Chicago with twenty seven Miami to provide the party an escort.  

Before leaving the fort, Heald destroyed all arms and ammunition that could not be carried and all of the liquor, according to Hull’s orders, though these things had been promised to the Potawatomi, and their destruction could be viewed as a symbolic destruction of friendship. Wells attempted to talk Heald into leaving the arms and ammunition intact, but both he and John Kinzie, a local trader who had friendly relations with the area’s Native population, advised for the destruction of the alcohol in Fort Dearborn. Ultimately, the arms, ammo, and liquor were destroyed, but other “goods in the factory store, and a considerable quantity of provisions” were delivered as promised. The group left Fort Dearborn at 9:00 am on 15 August, heading for Fort Wayne, located 165 miles southeast, but they never made it more than few miles; they were attacked by the Potawatomi while barely out of Chicago.

An early account of the event as understood by British Major General Henry Procter was incredibly grim:

The Garrison of Chicago has been taken, by the Indians, partly by Stratagem, more than a Fortnight since, and I am sorry to say that the Garrison consisting of fifty Men, and every other Person there, excepting an officer and his Lady who were wounded, and a Trader, Kenzie, were killed. We had no Knowledge of any

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10 Anthony J. Yanik, *The Fall and Recapture of Detroit in the War of 1812: In Defense of William Hull* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 86-87. William Wells was abducted then adopted by the Miami in 1784, when he was fourteen. He was named Apekonit, which meant ‘wild carrot’ because he had red hair. “Soon Apekonit was serving as a decoy in war parties on the Ohio River, luring American travelers by his fair skin and red hair. Wells’s birth family tried to ransom him back, but he chose to return to his Miami home, where he married and fought alongside the Western Indians against U.S. settlers and soldiers” before reconnecting with his biological family and becoming an employee of the United States government. Keating, *Rising Up From Indian Country*, 35.

11 This is Black Hawk’s understanding of the event: “They had a considerable quantity of powder in the fort at Chicago, which they had promised to the Indians; but the night before they marched, they destroyed it. I think it was thrown into the well! If they had fulfilled their word to the Indians, I think they would have gone safe.” *Black Hawk: An Autobiography*, ed. Donald Jackson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 67.

12 Keating, *Rising Up From Indian Country*, 133.

Attack having been intended by the Indians on Chicago, nor can they indeed be
said to be within the Influence of the Superintendent. ¹⁴

Procter’s understanding, that all but the Healds had been killed, was widespread, and this is why
something which could have been called a battle became known among United States citizens as
a massacre.

A “respectable source” out of St. Louis reported “Fort Chicago, on the Illinois, was
evacuated on the 15th of last month and the officers and soldiers put to death one mile from the
place. Three women and nine children were among the slain. The credulous Captain Wells
(Indian agent) had his breast cut open and his heart roasted and eaten by the chiefs present.”¹⁵
And, once he was ransomed and finally well enough to write, Heald’s account of the event
reported that, “16 regulars and all the militia were killed in this action, with two women and
twelve children… Lieutenant Lina T. Helm, with 25 non-commissioned officers and privates,
and 11 women and children, were prisoners when we were separated.”¹⁶ In actuality 26 regulars,
all twelve militiamen, two women, and twelve children were killed, while 28 regulars, seven
women, and six children were taken prisoner.

Fear Mongering

Civilians received such provocative news from their local newspapers, which offered
wartime coverage that did not leave out the gruesome details. The National Intelligencer, which
was the leading newspaper for Washington D.C., reported a lurid, provocative account of a Mrs.
Kennedy’s death at Native hands, as understood by a man living at Kaskaskia. His words declare
it “shocking beyond description. She having been pregnant, her body was found entirely naked,

¹⁴ Henry Procter to Isaac Brock, 9 September 1812 in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select
British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society,
1920), 520.
¹⁵ “Extract of a letter from a respectable source in St. Louis, Missouri Territory,” The National
¹⁶ “Extract from letter of Capt. Heald, former commander of Ft. Chicago,” The National Intelligencer, 3
cut open and the child taken out and hung up on a peg in the chimney. Her entrails were scattered all about the door and the hogs were eating them.”  

It is important to note that Captain Joseph Philips, in his official report of the event in question to Colonel W.P. Anderson, spoke only of Kennedy’s murder, excluding the horror story details and not even mentioning a more common place scalping. However, the vivid details of the Kaskasia letter fell in line with what it was believed the Natives were capable of, and sensationalized coverage worked to influence the public mind just as well as facts.

Fear mongering helped to turn those visceral fears into rhetorical weapons. A message from Major General Isaac Brock famously reminded General Hull that “it is far from my inclination to join in a wave of extermination, but you must be aware that the numerous body of Indians who have attached themselves to my troops will be beyond my control the moment the contest commences.” It was understood that Native people were perfidious, with loyalties that changed on whim rather than reason. As such, there was only so much civilizing influence even a respected man like Brock - supported by Tecumseh who was himself held up as a prime example of a “good” Native - could be expected to exert over his Native allies. So, his enemies had to expect that they might find themselves the recipients of a massacre which ignored the borders that were supposed to separate civilians from warfare.

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17 “‘Most Horrible!’ Extract of letter from a gentlemen at Kaskaskia,” The National Intelligencer, 12 April 1813 in Ibid., 76.
18 “Indian Massacres!” The National Intelligencer, 20 April 1813 in Ibid., 84.
19 Brock believed that “that Government [of the United States] will be compelled to secure their western frontier from the inroads of the Indians, and this cannot be affected without a very considerable force.” However, Brock did not think that these circumstances could be brought about without effort. He was savvy enough to understand that some of the Native people of North America felt betrayed by decisions made by the British government during the Revolutionary War and that, as a consequence, it would be necessary to prove “that we are earnestly engaged in the War.” “British Accounts,” The National Intelligencer, 17 September 1812 in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. V, 199; Isaac Brock to George Prevost, 2 December 1811, in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I, 273.
Procter also gave the implication that Natives under his command might move beyond his control during the heat of battle. However, white commanding officers characterized the Natives in various ways, changing their minds as it suited their needs. Sir George Prévost, the civilian Governor General and the military Commander in Chief of British forces in North America, reported that he had found a way to control his Native allies. He wrote cheerfully about the establishment of two volunteer corps “full of Loyalty and zeal” which would allow the British to fully “let loose the Indians upon them throughout the whole extent of their Western frontier, as they have a most commanding influence over them.” Colonel Edward Baynes, Adjunct General of the British forces in North America, let it be known that he had full control over his Native allies, but that he could let this control slip at any time. Therefore, settlers in American frontier towns who had “hitherto remained undisturbed” could expect “the same forbearance, and the same freedom from Rapine & plunder, which they have hitherto experienced” only so long as Baynes permitted it.

But if any method of control that could be exerted over the Natives was tenuous at best, then what could truly be done to safeguard one’s family from the clear and present danger posed by them? John Flemming, reporting to Governor Return Justice Meigs from Preble County, Ohio, offered up a brutal method for defending the innocents of the United States against this threat:

I think it would be a verrry good thing if their could go a good many men and ly in wait from them and scour the woods west of us I think it is enough to tuck the feelings of our sittisons in these western contryes when we hare of husbands been torn from their deer wives and wives from their husbands and

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20 Native warriors left to mind wounded prisoners alongside the British following the Battle of Frenchtown were said to have gotten drunk and “subsequently murder about 30 prisoners too badly wounded to walk.” Whether or not Procter truly had control over such events, the story made for a powerful threat. Hitsman, *The Incredible War of 1812*, 126.
children from their parents some scalp and tomahakd some throwd in to the
fire.\textsuperscript{23}

After all, there were many who believed that it “ought never to be forgotten – that fear alone
keeps the Indians quiet,” or that “nothing will prevent them massacring the defenseless border
but severe chastisement.”\textsuperscript{24} Such desperation, however, was capable of fueling action as well as
thought.

**White Men’s Duty**

The threat of butchery was used throughout the war to remind men why they had to fight
and what they had to fight for. Hysterical headlines sung out that, “Our frontier streeks with the
blood of the women and the children.”\textsuperscript{25} An article from the *Albany Register* - entitled “British
Barbarity” – described the coming of “horrible Hell hounds of savage warfare” who were to be
“let loose on your wives and children without a vow on the alter, fixed as fate, and solemn as
death, to expel the instigators of these enormities from the continent! The manes of slaughtered
women and children call aloud for vengeance! Vengeance!”\textsuperscript{26} A letter out of Kentucky looked at
the “Indians on our frontiers, who are daily murdering our peaceful citizens and defenceless
women and children” and wondered why the nation’s men were not universally volunteering for
service considering that not fighting could cost them the health, safety, and lives of their
families.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} John Flemming to Return Justice Meigs, 18 March 1813, in *Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812

\textsuperscript{24} “Extract of a Letter from John Johnston Esqr.,” 23 January 1812 in *Document Transcriptions of the War

\textsuperscript{25} “Our ‘Generous and Magnanimous’ Enemy,” *The National Intelligencer* 3 April 1813, in *Document

\textsuperscript{26} “British Barbarity,” *The National Intelligencer*, 19 September 1812 in *Document Transcriptions of the

\textsuperscript{27} “CHA: SCOTT,” *The National Intelligencer*, 19 May 1812, in *Document Transcriptions of the War of
On the Niagara Frontier, Brigadier General Alexander Smyth stated that “the best masculine defense of family values was a good offense that would thrust deep into Upper Canada, cast at the heart of savage darkness.”

Smyth also issued a bombastic proclamation, addressed to the men of the State of New York, which ran in the Buffalo Gazette on 17 November 1812 that questioned while all men were not eager to fight:

Has the race degenerated? Or have you, under the baneful influence of contending factions, forgotten your country? Must I turn from you and ask the men of the Six Nations to support the Government of the United States? Shall I imitate the officers of the British King, and suffer our ungathered laurels to be tarnished by ruthless deeds? Shame, where is thy blush? No. Where I command, the vanquished and the peaceful man, the child, the maid and the matron shall be secure from wrong. If we conquer, we will conquer but to save.

Smyth was incredulous that men would refuse to conform to their own prescribed gender roles, and insultingly insinuated that the uncivilized Native men might be able to conform to the role if New York’s white men could not, a tactic that would have been useful to increase enlistment and loyalty in a state divided by politics.

Likewise, Captain Doctor Cyrenius Chapin believed that it was the duty of all men to act towards “protecting the inhabitants from the outrages of the enemy and their property from the merciless plunderers.” And General Harrison’s men marched to a song which used the lyrics, “Freeman, no longer bear such slaughter, / Avenge your country’s cruel woe! / Arouse, and save your wives and daughters.”

They had to trek off to battle because if they did not, their wives

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30 To the Canadians, Captain Doctor Cyrenius Chapin’s “protection” was seen as raiding and he and his band became known as “the ‘forty thieves’ for its scant regard of the customs of civilized warfare.” Ruth McKenzie, *Laura Secord: The Legend and the Lady* (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1971), 45; 94-95.
31 Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 110.
and daughters would be the ones who paid the price. The supposed helplessness of women allowed them to serve as a motivational factor that drove men to fight.

The Surrender of Fort Detroit

However, the desire to protect women sometimes drove men to surrender as well. The presence of women in a combat situation was something that could compel a capitulation or otherwise force one’s course of action for fear that the situation could devolve into a shedding of innocent blood. In June of 1812, ignorant of the official declaration of war, Luther Chapin, Captain of the Cuyahoga, had sailed off laden down with Hull’s “baggage and that of most of the officers of the [North Western] army, all the hospital stores, his instructions from the war department, his Commission & those of most of the officers of the 4th Regt. the Ladies of two officers of said Regiment, Lieut. Goodwin and about 30 men.”32 The ladies were on deck when Provincial Marine Lieutenant Frederic Rolette pulled alongside to capture the ship, and this is believed to have contributed to Second-Lieutenant George Gooding’s decision to easily give up the ship.33

This war’s most infamous example of military maneuvering based on concern for the safety of women centers around William Hull’s surrender of Fort Detroit on 16 August 1812.34 A veteran of the Revolutionary War, Hull had earned the rank of Brigadier-General in the United States Army. At the start of the War of 1812, Hull was “Governor of the Michigan Territory and

32 “Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Detroit to his friend in this place dated 7th July 1812,” in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. VI: Letters to the Secretary of War, 1812, Relating to the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Part One, 81.
33 Berton, The American Invasion of Canada, 118-119.
34 On 11 June 1805, only five months after William Hull had been appointed governor of Michigan Territory, Detroit experienced a devastating fire. It started in the middle of the town in the middle of the day, and “when darkness settled down upon the world, the whole town was one vast scene of smoldering ruins, and the entire population were homeless,” save for the residents of one “French-built dwelling-house, on St. Anne-street, and a large brick storehouse almost in range standing below, near the river.”34 The ramifications of the fire were such that as of 1812, Detroit still “scarcely deserved the name of town, for it was, in reality, but a small village.” Quoted in E.M. Sheldon, The Early History of Michigan, From the First Settlement to 1815 (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1856), 397.
responsible for the welfare of its inhabitants.”35 He also commanded Fort Detroit, which, “was filled with women, children, and the old and decrepit people of the town and country. They were unsafe in the town, as it was entirely open and exposed to the enemies batteries. Back of the fort, or above it, there was no safety for them on account of the Indians.”36 Detroit was laden with the injured as well, housing more than one hundred, and overall it operated in “‘dirty and ragged’” conditions with supplies running low.37 Additionally, the promise of safety at Detroit was suspect, since the batteries across the river at Sandwich in Upper Canada could make it over Detroit’s walls.

And a ball did clear the walls, landing near the officer’s quarters and killing three men instantly.

Many women and children were in the house where the officers were slain. Among them were General Hull’s daughter and her children. Some of the women were petrified with affright, and were carried senseless to the bomb-proof vault for safety. Several of them were bespattered with blood; and the general, who saw the effects of the ball from a distance, knew not whether his own child was slain or not.38 Hull viewed “these casualties, [as] the precursors of future calamities.”39 He was filled with anxiety at the thought of what might befall the residents of Fort Detroit if the siege continued.

However, Hull himself firmly believed that the Native peoples were a serious threat to women and children on the frontiers. He had stated, “If the barbarous and Savage Policy of Great Britain be pursued, and the savages are let loose to murder our Citizens and butcher our women

35 Mackay, The Incredible War of 1812, 81.
37 Ibid., 99-100; Berton, The American Invasion of Canada, 178. Hull’s own daughter and grandchildren were among the residents who had piled into Detroit seeking safety. The daughter has been identified in places as being “Betsy,” and Hull did have a daughter called Elizabeth. However, Hull himself identifies her as “Mrs. Hickman,” which means that the daughter with Hull at Detroit is Ann Binney Hull Hickman, the wife of Captain Harris Hampden Hickman. The children with her were her two young daughters, Anne Maria Hickman and Sarah Louise Hickman, both Detroit babies, born on 23 July 1809 and June 1811, respectively.
38 Lossing, The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812, 288.
39 Ibid., 288.
and children, this war will be a war of extermination.” Thus, he had sworn that no quarter would be given to any man on the enemy side who partnered with the Natives. With the invasion of Fort Detroit looming in front of him, he suddenly had reason to wonder if his promise had been taken to heart, and if the British might be similarly merciless.

Brock’s forces, which amounted to 1000, “the whole force white, black, and red of the British,” were outnumbered by Hull’s. He commanded roughly 1000 regular troops and 300 to 600 militiamen and army volunteers. And all of them, save for 500 men who had been sent out to guard their supply routes, were in Fort Detroit and ready to be deployed as needed. Yet instead of fighting, William Hull decided to surrender.

At Hull’s court martial, Major Jessup recalled that Hull, in a state of visible fear, wondered, “My God, what shall I do with these women and children?” before he made the decision to send out an official offer of surrender. In his memoirs, Hull explained again his belief that “a savage will have blood for blood, though he draw it from the veins of the defenseless. Victory only heightens his inhuman thirst for blood.” Furthermore, he specified his own paternal fears: “Nor, sir, will I conceal, that, in the midst of carnage that might ensue in battle, my parental feelings saw a daughter and her offspring, who were with me in the fort, bleeding

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40 Mackay. *The Incredible War of 1812*, 75; Hull’s proclamation stated that “No white man found fighting by the side of an Indian will be taken prisoner – instant death will be his lot.” William Hull, A Proclamation, 13 July 1812, in *The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I.*, 27.


under the tomahawk of the Savage!” Hull defended his surrender by citing his fear that the women and children in his care would be massacred if he attempted to fight.

Though his actions were contemporaneously dismissed as cowardliness - it was remarked that Hull’s surrender was so disgraceful that “even the women were indignant at so shameful a degradation of the American character” – because it was commonly believed that his forces could have defeated the British, Hull’s fears were not his alone. According to Charles Askin, who had been outside Fort Detroit with the British army:

Many were wishing them not to capitulate – these were young Officers who were anxious [SIC] to have an oppy. Of distinguishing themselves; but most of us wished I believe they should – to spare the effusion of blood and for the sake of the poor Women & Children who we knew would not be spared by the Indians should an action once commence.

From Fort Wayne, Captain James Rhea, also of a mind with Hull, posted a frantic letter to John Johnston, an Indian Agent operating out of Piqua, Ohio, begging him to, “for God Sake,” provide them with an escort and supplies so that they could leave and save their families from the encroachment of the Natives.

But Hull was actually condemned nevertheless because his decision to surrender might have put the fort’s defenseless residents in even more danger. After Hull submitted, Detroit local Mary McCarty observed that, “Nor could they, even now, anticipate any safety for themselves and their families. They well knew that the Indian allies of the enemy… could not be entirely controlled by the most strenuous efforts on the part of the commanding officers, and constant

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43 Ibid.
46 Rhea’s plea reads as noticeably distraught, and one can virtually see the weight of the Dearborn Massacre weighing on his shoulders. James Rhea to John Johnston, 19 August 1812, in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. II, 27.
annoyance, pillage, and perhaps massacre, were seen in the murky vista of the future.”47 And, once word spread about the demise of Fort Dearborn, the thought of the Natives honoring the terms of the surrender would have seemed even more incredulous. Following Hull’s capitulation, Isaac Brock was credited with doing “all he could to protect us [citizens of Detroit], and probably prevented a general massacre of the Americans” by men who could not be depended upon to uphold the conditions of Hull’s surrender.48

Conversely, though, fears like Hull’s were offered up as justification for not going away to war. A fear of the Natives, wrote Brock, affords, “the Militia a plausible pretext for staying at home – they do not like leaving their families within the power of the Indians.”49 Every active militiaman “represented a home left defenseless, a wife looking and watching in fear and suspense, and little children terrified by the alarm they could but dimly understand.”50 Ohio’s governor, Return Justice Meigs, was bombarded with requests to abstain from service in the name of family safety. He was reminded that, “Without our immediate presence [our families] are wholly helpless and defenceless… the cries of our tender wives and infants ring louder in our Ears than the calls of constituted authority” and told that his calls to arms were “Orders we View as unreasonable as we must leave our helpless familys” to face the “Mercy of heathen” alone.51

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48 “However, in some regards he was overly permissive, allowing “petty grievances” to go unpunished and “whenever a murder was committed, the murderer was kept out of the way till the affair was forgotten. Human life in time of war is little valued, and it required but a few days for a single murder to be forgotten, except by the immediate friends of the deceased.” Brock may have done his best to prevent “a general massacre,” but he allowed smaller or more singular offences to pass by without censure, fearing that the Natives would chafe under restrictions that were too harsh. Mary McCarty Quoted in Sheldon, *The Early History of Michigan*, 404.
50 “Middlefield, Geauga County,” in vol. 1 of *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve*, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 6-10 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 9.
Across the border, residents of Upper Canada believed that, “Our wives, our children, our property, our all is at stake” and asked each other, “And shall we then tamely submit and see ourselves plundered of our well earned property, of property for which we have fought and bled?”

However, this threat to their wives, their children, and their property was not mainly from the Native peoples, but their American neighbors. Particularly suspect was the American army, which was said to be comprised solely of the “refuse and scum of the earth, Renegadoes [SIC] and Vagabonds of all Nations, who having fled from justice in their Native lands have found an asylum in the United States.” Meanwhile, the Native Peoples were themselves particularly concerned about their own wives and children, who were in danger from the military activities of both the United States and Great Britain.

Acts of White Violence

The Sioux chief Wabasha, called la Feuille Tiré by the French, remarked, “We have always found our English Father the protector of our women and children… our English Father, who never deceived us, and we are certain never will.” His statement served as both a caution and a promise. Despite past disloyalty, if the British continued to function as the “protector of our women and children” then the Natives could continue to treat the British as those “who never deceived us,” offering the allegiance warranted by such good behavior.

55 This meant willfully ignoring the numerous times that the British had been duplicitous with the Natives, including the breaking treaties of the Covenant Chain with the Six Nations, awarding away Native lands in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, and barring Fort Miami to warriors fighting the Americans during the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers. Robert S. Allen, “His Majesty’s Indian Allies: Native Peoples, the British Crown, and the War of 1812,” Michigan Historical Review, 14, no. 2 (Fall 1988), 1-5; The United States showed no greater loyalty, and from 1803 and 1809, the Indians of the Northwest, Indiana, and Illinois Territories had negotiated fifteen land treaties as American settlers kept pressing west. Keating, Rising Up From Indian Country, 52. These betrayals were brought up in arguments for Native neutrality during another white man’s war. In June of 1812 a group of younger chiefs representing “the Ondowaga, Onondague, and Cayugwas living within the American Boundary, came to the council.
Matthew Elliott was told, “we heartily thank you both for having taken the condition of our poor Women and children to Your considerations: We plainly see that You pity us by the concern You show for our welfare.”\textsuperscript{56} In the United States, the Orator of the Kickapoos echoed this. He promised Harrison that he would willingly “throw the tomahawk on the ground, I shall no more make war with the white people. I bury the war club and tomahawk” if the Americans would agree to offer “pity” to his women and children.\textsuperscript{57}

However, the Native men’s concern for their families was leveraged in both directions. A speech delivered to the Delaware advised them to “live at peace with your white and red Brethren pursue your usual employment - - Provide for your Women and Children,” while it was suggested at Fort Wayne that the “greatest service the Red man can render to their Great White Father, will be to remain at home and take care of their women and children.”\textsuperscript{58} The implication given in both cases was that if the Natives did not stay peacefully at home, their women and children would be left there alone, defenseless at their own devices.

Representatives of white governments attempted to take advantage of these concerns. John Johnston, an Indian agent in the United States Northwest Territory, observed, “As one acquainted with Indian affairs must know that while the Delawares remain here with their women & children, they cannot make war upon us, they must first remove them out of our fire at the Grand River,” and asked, “Why then should we endanger the comfort, even the existence of our families, to enjoy their smiles only for the Day in which they need us?” Quoted in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816}, ed. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1970), 289.

\textsuperscript{56} “Speech of the Shawanoes, Kikapoois & Winibiegoes, delivered by TehKumtha: at Machekethic, on the Wabash, in Answer to the Message I [Colonel M. Elliot] sent to them by the Hurons last Winter,” in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I}, 312.


\textsuperscript{58} “Speech to the Delawares,” in \textit{Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. II}, 1; A bit of arrogance closed this particular speech: “For our Father is calling together so many of his Warriors, that he will have a sufficient number, without the assistance of his Red Children.” “Council at Fort Wayne,” in \textit{Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. VI: Letters to the Secretary of War, 1812, Relating to the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Part One}, 145.
reach.” And, after the Battle of the Thames, the Americans required that “a number of their wives and children are to be brought in, and incamped [SIC] near this [Detroit] as hostages, by way of security for their good faith toward us” before they were willing to broker a peace accord.

Though they believed themselves to be better civilized, the white soldiers and militiamen of Canada, Great Britain, and the United States did not have hands free of civilian blood. Near Greenville in Ohio, “a party of friendly and very inoffensive Indians, consisting of three men, and two women with a child,” were attacked by a group of thirteen or fourteen white men while some of them were still sleeping. Two of them were killed while a third was wounded. At Michilimackinac, Lieutenant Colonel Robert McDouall heard from Colonel William McKay of an incident where “Gen’l. Clarke invited, & by much promises of Friendship got hold of four more of the Winebagoes – he shut them up in a log house, & afterwards shot them thro’ between the logs.” Wabasha’s wife was among those slain here. And a Delaware woman reported to Captain Samuel McCord her village had been brutalized by white men:

herself and three others Made there Escape from the White People that about 800 of our People came there [Green Town] 6 days ago and requested them to come into the Settlement their Chief (Armstrong) told them the Governor had invited to come in to Zeanses and he knew the best way and would go their – they immediately set a gard round the town Armstrong hid himself in a cornfield and the White People theretned the nation if they did not produce him accordingly they found him and took him to the army and this Woman States that one Man and a Woman and Child Escaped the gard in company with herself and

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60 Duncan McArthur to Thomas Worthington, 6 October 1813 in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. III, 220.
62 McDouall concluded this letter by declaring “After a recital of these atrocities it is scarcely necessary to ask if the enemy are likely to meet with mercy, but do they deserve it?” Robert McDouall to Gordon Drummond, 16 July 1814 in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I., 256.
they were attacked and fired on since which time she had not seen any of them.  

McCord did not believe her report and dismissed the account without investigation.

Fires along the Niagara Frontier

Furthermore, white men did not always consider the consequences their actions had on their own women. For example, orders given by white men caused the wide scale destruction of properties and livelihoods on the Niagara Frontier during the “tit-for-tat incendiary war.” This conflict saw Brigadier General George McClure put the torch to Newark and Queenston while Major General Phineas Riall return the favor at Lewiston, Black Rock and Buffalo, despite the fact that their targets were predominantly inhabited by women, children, and other civilians. Another nation’s women were harmed to protect the citizens of their own countries.

The 10-11 December 1813 burning of Newark destroyed some “three hundred homes worth an estimated £37,625….” An eyewitness later remarked that the ‘once beautiful town of Newark’ had been turned into ‘a ruin, nothing to be seen but brick chimneys standing,’” in order to deprive the British armies of winter quarters. The attacked happened when all able-bodied men were either in service or in prison, so “Only women, children, and sick old men remain. Two babies are born this night in the light of the leaping flames.” Mrs. William Dickson was bedridden when the Americans ordered the town to evacuate, and was “carried out of her house, bed and all, plunked down in the snow. In helpless horror she watched her home – the first brick house to be built in Newark – set ablaze.” She lost everything she owned, including “damask curtains, cherry and walnut furniture, a full set of India table china, stores, stoves, clothing,

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64 Quoted in Berton, Flames Across the Border, 292.
66 Berton, Flames Across the Border, 255.
pictures, and, above all, one of the finest libraries in Upper Canada – a thousand books purchased in England at a cost of three thousand dollars.” It is estimated that four hundred women, children, and elderly men were likewise rendered homeless, destitute, and turned out into the snow.

The closest intact building, at least four miles away from Newark, did not have room to take in all of the newly homeless. Some Newark residents walked “up to ten miles that night through the swirling snow” before they found shelter. “Ninety-eight houses, barns, and stables have been destroyed…. All public buildings – jail, court house, library – are in ashes. Two churches have been fired. In McEwen’s smokehouse, the refugees seek what shelter they can.” Only the stone structure of St. Mark’s Church had been left standing, so many could not find shelter beyond a chimney turned wind-block or a root cellar which had been given a roof made of boards salvaged from the rubble.

On the American side of the border, on 30 December 1813, “Buffalo lost 66 wooden houses, two brick houses, one stone house, 16 stores, 35 barns, 15 shops, all estimated at a value of $190,000. Black Rock lost 16 frame houses, 11 log houses, and eight barns, a $19,000 value. The losses elsewhere on the Niagara frontier amounted to 20 frame houses, 67 log houses, five stores, 29 barns, and 30 shops, a $141,000 value.” Shortly after the attack, American General

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67 Peggy Dymond Leavy, Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812 (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 127; Berton, Flames Across the Border, 256; The Dickson’s brick home was valued at £1000 by the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada when they compiled a list of homes lost in Niagara and on the Niagara Frontier. The Report of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada: With an Appendix, and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors, ed. John Strachan (Montreal, Lower Canada: William Gray, 1817), 379. Though outside the full purview of this paper, this particular instance brings to mind a contrasting account. After he burned Washington, General Robert Ross revealed to Dr. James Ewell, the city’s leading physician, that “he regret[ed] burning the Capital library and says he would have not fired the President’s Mansion had the First Lady remained [because] I make war neither against letters nor ladies.” Berton, Flames Across the Border, 373.

68 Ibid., 256.

69 The only buildings in Buffalo to escape destruction “were the St. John cottage, Reese blacksmith shop (which became the town’s makeshift morgue), and the jail, which sustained damage but remained standing.” Merton M. Wilner, Niagara Frontier: A Narrative and Documentary History, vol. I (Chicago: The S.J. Clark Publishing Co., 1931), 255; 237.
Lewis Cass passed through the city and declared it to be “‘a scene of distress and destruction such as I have never before witnissed [SIC].’”

Months later, this description still held true. Samuel Sherwood described the dismal situation in great detail in a letter to Laura Bostwick, his fiancé:

This heap of ruins in December last was one of the most flourishing villages in the State of New York, situated on the outlet of Lake Erie at the junction of Buffalo Creek with the lakes, commanding at once an extensive prospect of the lake, Buffalo Creek and the majestic Niagara.

I should be gratified in furnishing you a sketch of the wretched beings who are hovering about here. There are perhaps twenty or thirty new buildings commenced, two or three houses that are habitable, perhaps fifty or sixty shanties or huts of boards. Fifteen or twenty of these huts are all filled with men, women, and children. There are about three or four hundred of our officers and soldiers here, the wounded and the dying, both American and British have been brought here from the late battle at Chippewa.

All these are scattered about among the ruins and in their tents, scantily sheltered from the peltings of the pitiless storm of rain which is now falling and has been for the last six hours. Added to these are about two or three hundred Indians, squaws and papooses – a motley, squalid disgusting species of the human being.71

The favor paid at Newark had been returned and the citizens of Buffalo were left in the same condition of want.

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70 C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 112. The people of Canandaigua, New York organized a relief committee in response to the December destruction. On 8 January 1813, they explained their reasoning: “Our roads are filled with people, many of whom have been reduced from a state of competence and good prospects to the last degree of want and sorrow. So sudden was the blow by which they have been crushed that no provision could be made to elude or to meet it. The fugitives from Niagara county especially were dispersed under circumstances of so much terror that, in some cases, mothers find themselves wandering with strange children and children are seen accompanied by such as have no other sympathies with them than those of common suffering.” Eventually, the state legislature “appropriated $40,000 for frontier relief, besides $5,000 for the Tuscarora [SIC] Indians and $5,000 for the Canadian refugees. New York City voted $3,000 and Albany $1,000, and private benevolence contributed provisions, clothing and money.” Quoted in Merton M. Wilner, *Niagara Frontier: A Narrative and Documentary History*, vol. II (Chicago: The S.J. Clark Publishing Co., 1931), 258-259.

Theft and Destruction

In addition to these large-scale bouts of destruction, smaller incidents of theft and ruin occurred during the course of the war. Charles Askin wrote about receiving a message from Mrs. Anderson, “begging that we would go and prevent the Indians from plundering her house.”

Askin and Major Chambers arrived at the Anderson home to find that

The Indians had taken a number of things – and were taking every thing valuable they could get hold of – they paid no attention to us whatever when we tried to make them desist. The Hurons were the first to break in & Plunder this house and some of them were M’s. Anderson’s friends – from this house they went to several other houses and plundered them, old M’s. Knaggs house was among others plundered, some Indians remained about Anderson’s most all day, taking and destroying things.

Lieutenant Colonel William McKay reported on “shameful depridations [sic] committed dureing [sic] the Action on the 17th and Since – many of them (puants) in place of meeting the Enemy, immediately on their arrival run off to the fams kill’d the inhabitants cattle and pillaged their Houses even to the Covering off their Beds and leaving many without a Second Shirt to put on their backs – Even in the Village they did the Same outrages breaking to pieces what they Could not Carry away.” However, white men committed acts of plunder just as readily.

In the 21 September 1812 attack on Ganarque, in present day Leeds and Grenville United Counties, Ontario, American soldiers under the command of Captain Benjamin Forsyth fired upon the home of Colonel Joel Stone. Their attack “wounded Mrs. Stone, who was the only

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73 William McKay to Robert McDouall, 27 July 1814 in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I., 261. The term “puants,” also sometime “puans,” refers to the Ho-Chunk, also known as the Winnebago. Originating with the French “puant,” meaning stinking or smelly, the name was assigned because of the tribe’s location near Green Bay, which had been called “La Baye des Puants” because “during the heat of summer on account of either the quality of the water or the too great quantity of fish, the water is entirely covered with them and as it immediately becomes foul and putrid, it is hardly possible to approach the bank on account of the stench and the water is consequently very disgusting.” Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vol., XVI, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1902), 360.
person in it. They broke open and ransacked his Trunks, and had his Bedding and other articles carried down to the shore with an intention of carrying them off with them; but this was prevented by their officers.”

During the embarkation of Brigadier General Alexander Smyth’s first aborted crossing “three American sailors crossed over to the opposite shore and spent two hours burning houses and stores, shooting ‘fowls, ducks, and pigs,’ before returning to the American side with their plunder.” Mrs. Mary Cooley Dick left her Plattsburg home when British troops came through town and returned to find “her home despoiled of many valuable articles.” Penelope Beikie, on the other hand, “kept my Castle, when all the rest fled and it was well for us I did so, - our little property was saved by that means. Every house they found deserted was completely sacked.” While Canadian Indian Agent James Givins was away, Mrs. James Givins and their seven children “are driven from her home by plunderers who strip it of all valuables – furniture, curtains, bedsheets, liquor, everything from a silver toast rack to an English saddle.” Givins filed a complaint with General Dearborn, only to be told that there was nothing he could do for her.

In general, Isaac Wilson explained to his brother in a letter dated 5 December 1813, “those residents unlucky enough to live near troop encampments suffered ‘very much in their property.’’ Wilson said that foot soldiers would steal ‘provisions, money, and wearing apparel’ while cavalrymen would ‘put their horses into barns and let them destroy everything they

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74 Originally in the Kingston Gazette, 29 September 1812, quoted in Hitsman, The Incredible War of 1812, 109.
75 On two separate occasions, Smyth embarked, then disembarked his forces, unwilling to attempt a landing on the Canadian side of the border. Skeen, Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812, 102-103.
77 Quoted in Hitsman, The Incredible War of 1812, 140, referring to American soldiers.
78 Berton, Flames Across the Border, 54.
contain.’”\textsuperscript{79} However, even given the events described above, Wilson believed that that the Native peoples had not taken advantage of the war to pillage and plunder. In fact, Wilson argued that depredations committed by Natives “were often of a less serious nature since they generally restricted their activities to ‘helping themselves to a few provisions now and then.’”\textsuperscript{80} He was not the only one who felt this way. “I am persuaded that the Indians have done less Mischief upon the Frontier since the Declaration of war than they did in the same length of time preceding it,” Harrison reported, in a letter to the War Office.\textsuperscript{81}

Women also had to contend with the incidental ruinations that were visited upon them as casualties of the war. As in the American Revolution, when “armies invaded their supposedly separate sphere, women had to contend with the crimes and diseases that marched through their communities in the troops’ wake.”\textsuperscript{82} The face of the landscape was devastated by the mere presence of soldiers in an area, affecting health, safety, and the economy. Wherever “they encamped they dug field entrenchment and refuse pits. They burned rail fences for fuel, destroyed bridges, and ruined the rough pioneer roads with the transport of their heavy guns and ammunition.” Large marching bodies of men flattened fields, destroyed crops, and were generally an obtrusive presence in the lives of those who they lived among.\textsuperscript{83}

The war also created mental and emotional suffering among the women of the United States and Canada, though this type of suffering is rarely the focus of the rhetoric of the time decrying how women will suffer in wartime. In Ohio, one morning “at Taptoo the Gun was fired

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\textsuperscript{79} Quoted in Sheppard, \textit{Plunder, Profit, and Paroles}, 128.
\textsuperscript{80} Quoted in Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{83} McKenzie, \textit{Laura Secord}, 33.
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the Artillery Man that fired was drunk & took the Taptoo for the Revelee, he was put in confinement the fire raised some little alarm particularly in Town some of the Inhabitants ran up to the Fort & did not so much as take time to dress themselves.” An incidence of drunken carelessness unsettled an entire town, as did numerous false alarms throughout both countries over two and a half years.

In Upper Canada, Mrs. Cain and her daughter found themselves detained by members of the American military. Once released, the women “came off in a very great fright, fearing they might be re-taken,” not calming until delivered to safety by British troops. Mrs. Annah Terrel spent time as a prisoner in Detroit, and “When the Indians would bring in scalps fresh from their victims she would look to see if she could distinguish her own husband’s hair.” In a journal entry dated 29 May 1813, Lieutenant John Le Couteur relayed that “all the Ladies, who had relatives in the attacking force, with those who had only friends,” spent the Battle of Fort George “listening in breathless trepidation to the distant roar of Guns & Musquetry while the action lasted.” Furthermore, the battle caused an “indescribable” amount of “anxiety and alarm” to be experienced by William and Ann Ellice Robison, the children of his landlady, Mrs. Elizabeth Robison.

There are accounts that at least three relatives of victims of the Battle of Frenchtown were believed to have wasted away from longing and lack of knowledge about the final fates of

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their relatives. The mother of Captain Pachal Hickman was so “sorely distressed about the massacre [that] … she pined away and died on June 9, 1813.” It was attributed that Anna Hart, the widow of Captain Hart, suffered the same fate. Jane Allen, Lieutenant-Colonel Allen’s widow, waited for eight years for her husband to come home, “keeping the shutters open each night that he might see the candle she kept burning there. At last, with all hope extinguished, she, too, wasted away from grief.” Her death happened in February 1821.88 Such stories supported the idea of women as fragile and helpless, ineffectual victims of men’s warfare.

Starvation Worries

But violence stemming from enemy combatants was not the only way in which women were considered victims waiting to happen. Contemporaneous correspondence suggested that women, particularly those who lived in the frontier regions, would simply be unable to manage without able-bodied protectors and providers. Harvests would be left to rot in fields which would then sit fallow for want of tending, and other daily labors required outside of the home would suffer as well. It was believed that if all the able-bodied men were called away to fight, then there would be nobody left who was capable of planting, harvesting, and overall providing for women.

Planting and harvesting season were a particular concern, and these times inspired in men a great reluctance to join or remain with a militia, despite the punishments which might result from desertion.89 Governor Meigs again received requests for exemption from militia service on the basis that families would starve without men there to feed them. He is told that, “it would be the ruination of our County and themselves the inhabitants in many parts will not nor cannot Get

88 Berton, The American Invasion of Canada, 310.
89 In Upper Canada, for example, John Graves Simcoe’s Militia Act required that all capable men ages sixteen to sixty “attend authorized militia parades or pay fines ranging from two to eight dollars an offence.” Sheppard, Plunder, Profit, and Paroles, 41.
half their seed in the ground which they ought to have for the preservation of their familys.” He later received notification that, “much of their crops was wasted for want of persons to gather them – to have extended their service two other months would deprive them of planting the approaching season.” At the time, such reports could have been seen as proof that these fears were valid, and that women really could not manage alone.

Despite these concerns, however, one finds that the soldiers actively contributed to food shortages. Harrison made plans to “employ a few days in destroying Corn & other [illeg.] at the Potawatime & Miami Towns of Elk Hart & the forks of the W bash.” Thus, Native villages in the region were deprived of a myriad of crops, including corn, wheat, barley, buckwheat, oats, pumpkins, melons, and potatoes, and empty dwellings were destroyed as well. These actions not only worsened the starvation conditions of the Natives, they ruined a local food source which could have fed American soldiers and civilians living in the area.

In Upper Canada, where food had been relatively scarce prior to 1812, it was also feared that ordering men to leave for the militia would exacerbate the problem. Even for those individuals most desirous of military service, “the idea of leaving their families and farms at this season occasions their principle dissatisfaction.” Lieutenant General Sir Gordon Drummond, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, remarked on the matter of the militia, “I find it absolutely impracticable to keep them any longer, as the whole produce of the neighbouring country is in

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91 Edward W. Tupper to Return Justice Meigs, 16 February 1813, in Ibid. 117.
93 Antal, A Wampum Denied, 131. Over the course of the war, crops were sometimes relieved from civilians to be used to keep the armies fed. A report sent from Drummond to Prevost informs him that “the greatest part of the Grain in the possession of the farmers in front of the Chippawa has been threshed out, and the produce generally, withdrawn for the use of the army.” Gordon Drummon to George Prevost, 2 October 1814 in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I, 205.
the greatest danger of being lost.” Drummond followed up with a report that, “The greatest part of the Grain in the possession of the farmers in front of the Chippawa has been threshed out, and the produce generally, withdrawn for the use of the Army.” In Leeds County, Ontario, Metty Douglas, a widowed mother, petitioned for an overturning of Colonel Joel Stone’s strict enforcement of the militia draft. Douglas declared that she was “a poor, helpless and sickly old Woman and no one to help me but one boy. I have three sons in the army and Now I am like to have the last taken away an if he is gone, I shall inevitably suffer.” Douglas’ words echoed those uttered by men on both sides of the border.

The Native peoples repeatedly mentioned the lack of food available to them in their communications with their allies. The Wea chief Stone Eater, in a speech addressed to Harrison, stated, “Father – You ought to know that the Indians are very poor, the women and children have nothing to eat.” B.F. Stickney relayed to William Eustis, the American Secretary of War, information from the Prophet, Tenskwatawa, that Shawnee women and children were “actually starving.” And members of the Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibwa, Wyandot, Miami, Kickapoo, and Delaware, upon deserting Procter, immediately beseeched Brigadier General Duncan McArthur for provisions. Tribal representative informed him “we are at your mercy…. Our squaws and children are perishing. If you take us by the hand, we are willing to take up the tomahawk against any power, either white or red, which you may direct.” Food bought loyal soldiers and as food...
supplies decreased, it became an increasingly important part of negotiations. Women and children’s suffering was considered negotiable.

For the sake of their women and children, Native men were willing to perceive benevolence within the nonnative populations of North America, despite the unsatisfactory, ill-treatment they received after their participation in Colonial Era wars, the Revolutionary War, and the Northwest Indian War. This should by no means be seen as a show of naïveté, however. Since the promise of service in exchange for compassion was a two-sided bargain, there was an extreme willingness on the part of the Natives to call out broken promises when their families’ needs were not being met.

Mere days before the official outbreak of war, the Kickapoo chief Pemoratome reminded Ninian Edwards, Governor of the Illinois Territory, that it was Edwards who had expressed a desire that the Kickapoo be able “to live in peace, to maintain and feed our women and children,” but then proceeded to make it impossible for them to do so: “But how can we feed our women and children. We cannot go any distance from home to hunt, without falling in with your young men who are continually going and coming through our hunting country - - How can we hunt?”

Before the Battle of the Thames, Tecumseh berated Proctor, “Listen! You told us, at that time, to bring forward our families to this place; and we did so; and you promised to take care of them, and that they should want for nothing, while the men would go and fight the enemy.” At the time, the Shawnee warriors were in an unpopular retreat alongside their British allies and their famished families had been reduced to scavenging refuse.

101 Pemoratome, Chief Kickapoos to Ninian Edwards, 8 June 1812 in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. VI, 23.

A long-term failure to provide provisions for one’s allies could result in desertion to the enemy. However, by January 1814 provisions were running out in all quarters. It was estimated that there were at least 3000 Natives displaced and hungry on the Western end of Lake Ontario, and that at least 2000 of them were women and children. In an effort to alleviate their needs, the Natives had started pawning their belongings for supplies. By December 1814, William Caldwell reported “on a subject of the very first importance, - it is the manner in which the Indians and their families are provisioned, the quantity is so very scarce that it will not enable them to more than exist. To keep them from starving they have sold for vegetables… nearly all their clothing and silver ornaments, and as this resource is at an end, I am apprehensive unless some other means are taken to feed them, that we shall not long have them to feed, as they already begin to talk of going off, not from want of loyalty to us, but (as they say) from starvation.” The ultimate inability of many men to care for their women in the last days of the war seemed to be a defeat just as meaningful as any that took place on the battlefield.

The Burden of Women

Paradoxically, however, women were assigned one additional role during the war. Contrary to all of the documentation that casted them as defenseless dependants, as objects that incited men to fight or flee, or to strike deals with dubious allies, women were also written about as if they were bothersome burdens. They were dismissed as not resilient enough for the physical demands of army life. Their presence interfered with advances and retreats. Clearing them from an area before a battle was depicted as a tedious task.

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104 Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles*, 120.
Furthermore, women were viewed as taking up space and depleting resources that were integral to the functionality and wellbeing of an army. If they were present, then they demanded extra resources, time, and consideration. They were judged to be a responsibility in a way that other men would never be, because men could be an asset to the fight.

Examples of this way of thinking can be seen quite readily during the arduous British retreat out of the American Northwest following the American victory in the Battle of Lake Erie. Setting out from Sandwich, Upper Canada, on 24 September 1813, Lieutenant Colonel Augustus Warburton found “his moving columns of soldiers… constantly slowing and stopping to allow groups of Native women to pass by.” British military dependents consisting of 88 wives and 141 children were stranded at Matthew Dolsen’s farm in Dover, Upper Canada because of foul weather and unmanageable roads.106 Procter made the devastating decision not to burn his bridges behind him because of the large number of women and children, mostly the families of his Native allies, straggling behind his army. His choice appeased the Natives, but it allowed the Americans to pursue him more easily. Furthermore, Procter delayed making the decision to fall back to the defensible Moraviantown to make a stand against Harrison because the town had not been properly cleared of women and children, both those belonging to the Natives and the families of his own armies.107

When the Americans arrived at Amherstburg, “with Governor Shelby in advance, they met, neither valiant British regulars nor painted savages, but a troop of modest, well-dressed


107 Procter’s own wife and children had been removed from the equation before the Battle of the Thames, sent off to Burlington heights for their own protection. Henry Procter to Francis de Rottenburg, 23 October 1813 in *The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. I*, 326.
women, who came to implore mercy and protection” after being abandoned by Procter’s army. Further stragglers of Procter’s retreat eventually found themselves overtaken by the American advance. The soldiers were in no mood to abide anything that might slow them down: “...the bank [of the Thames] was full of men who fired some shots at us because we did not come ashore fast enough when ordered and they shot a woman through the cheeks. When they got us ashore, they robbed us of everything they could carry away, even my mother’s young baby clothes.” Again, a complaint was carried to the commanding officer, General Harrison, and again it seemed that nothing was to be done.

During the trip to North America, Lieutenant John Le Couteur wrote that it was women who were responsible for making an unpleasant trip unbearable. While on the Spithead, Le Couteur had to effectively threaten the female passengers with grounding to temper what he described as rowdy behavior attributed to inebriation: “I promise to send off any woman who misbehaved, to remain on board of the Man of War, till the voyage was over.” He also complained that the heat and stench below deck were exacerbated because the vessel had been burdened with extra bodies by having to transport women and children along with the soldiers.

On the Niagara Frontier, in the summer of 1814, supply shortages compelled Drummond to half the rations made available to the dependents of the Native peoples allied with his

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109 “The American regulars under General Harrison came up and my father was placed under regular guard when he at once complained of the treatment we had received.” Eventually, this complaint was carried to General Harrison by the man’s wife, who found him to have been very kind, assuring her, “My good woman, I will do everything I can for you.” Unfortunately, however, the militiamen were growing weary of Harrison and their situation, and dismissively said, “Who cares for General Harrison? None of his business what we do.” Quoted in Antal, *A Wampum Denied*, 326.

110 One could assume that the seasickness and the rations of grog being sold around might have had some influence on these “behaviors.” “Spithead, March 1812,” Le Couteur, *Merry Hearts Make Light Days*, 54-56.

111 Ibid., 54.
forces. Days later he considered the situation further, and concluded instead that the matter necessitated his “ordering all the Women belonging to the Right Division (beyond 3a Comp.\textsuperscript{y}) to go down to the Lower Province, with a view of decreasing as much as possible the issues.”\footnote{112} Consequently, dependents of his own men were dismissed to fend for themselves.

At Fort Michilimackinac, Captain Charles Roberts was critical of “the dreadfull consumption of Provisions caused by these people who flocked in from all Quarters with their Wives and Children” and found himself “obliged… to send them off as fast as possible” to alleviate the situation.\footnote{113} Captain Robert Barclay likewise lamented that “the quantity of Beef, and flour consumed here is tremendous [SIC], there are such hoardes of Indians with their Wives, and children,” when supplies at Fort Amherstburg began dwindling rapidly because of Oliver Perry’s near stranglehold over shipping on Lake Erie.\footnote{114}

After they negotiated for peace with Harrison following Tecumseh’s fall at the Battle of the Thames, thirty seven chiefs, speaking on behalf of six tribes, turned over their wives and children to the American forces as hostages. However, by this time resources were so scant that there were not provisions to spare for hostages while the American armies still needed to be maintained in fighting condition. Subsequently, the Native “women and children are seen grubbing in the streets for bones and rinds of pork thrown away by the soldiers. Putrefied meat, discarded in the river, is retrieved and devoured. Feet, heads, and entrails of cattle – the offal of the slaughterhouses – are used to fill out the meager rations.” Those Natives not turned over to American forces made their way back to the Canadian side of the border where Burlington
Heights absorbed an estimated two thousand Native women and children who were also desperately hungry and seeking food.\textsuperscript{116}

Conclusion

Ultimately, during the War of 1812, women were spoken of, and often treated, as if they were hapless victims. They were predetermined to be incapable of defending themselves should war erupt between the United States and Great Britain, and stripped further of their agency as the war progresses. They were written about as helpless targets of soldiers and warriors, who will relieve them of food and property, and possibly their lives as well. While women did indeed suffer real violence, it is important to note that these prescribed roles allowed for their presence to be leveraged as a bargaining chip, held up as a threat, or offered as an excuse. Alliances were struck and surrenders were given based in part on the supposition that doing so could prevent the suffering and death of women and families. Much of this, however, was based on reasoning resulting from changes in gender roles that arose in North American society prior to the War of 1812.

The next chapter examines the multifaceted roles that women did assume during this conflict. Instead of passively sitting by while the war impacted them, many were active contributors, both in their expected capacities – homemakers, caregivers, and such, and otherwise. Women defied the expectations placed upon their gender and instead successfully held down jobs and contributed to their households’ protection and economies. They served as messengers and spies, and even actually participated in combat situations, when need and opportunity presented themselves. They embraced the “masculine” positions they found themselves thrust into, as necessitated by the absence of males in their locality or merely by the

\textsuperscript{116} Berton, \textit{Flames Across the Border}, 208.
changes to society created by war, and were capable of surviving, and even thriving, by their own merits.
CHAPTER FOUR: FEMALE REALITIES: CONTRIBUTION AND SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF WAR

Women were able to participate in the War of 1812 in ways vastly different from the gendered roles typical for the time period and their culture. They were capable of working in partnership with and in support of the men fighting the war. Moreover, they were able to work adjacent to them, to protect the lives and livelihoods of their families, to save or abandon properties as necessary, and generally to live or die under their own choices, as entities separated from their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. During the War of 1812, women were not just victims or liabilities, and women without men were not solely helpless and hopeless.

Despite the aspiration to preserve the strictly separate gender roles promoted by upper class whites, the social disruption caused by war made this gender role division even harder to maintain. As Drew Gilpin Faust asks, “What was maleness when it was defeated and impoverished, when men had failed as providers and protectors? What did womanhood involve once the notion of dependence and helplessness became an insupportable luxury?”1 War created a situation that forced men to continually, actively prove their masculinity while simultaneously forcing women to abandon their femininity.

There were generally limits to how far the assigned lines between men and women could be blurred. Even during times when men encountered a threatening situation and found themselves weakened or lacking control, or “made uncomfortable by the activities of Aboriginal peoples, their manly authority was not seriously at risk” at a systematic level. But Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan explain that women’s’ claim to femininity was more tenuous. Even if a woman was given nominal charge over a business during her husband’s absence, she was not

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permitted to have official authority, and women were offered very little official recognition, even when they were working in connection with the army, because they could not be recognized as having succeeding outside of their traditional positions.2

Yet, as Holly Mayer states, “women have always been a part of warfare, if not as soldiers then as military retainers, home-front supporters, resisters, or victims.”3 Linda Grant De Pauw created a more expansive list of the typical roles played by women during warfare: victim, instigator, camp follower, war leader, rear guard, covert operations, amazons, and androgynous warriors.4 Male rhetoric about the war focused on the victim category, but women participated in other ways as well, so finding their contributions is just a matter of “‘uncovering’ and ‘restoring women’s activities, experiences, and identities to the historical record.’”5 This chapter locates these categories within the context of the War of 1812, but it will also be examining an additional category: survivor. Simply staying alive during the War of 1812 seemed to defy the expectations of men for women to ultimately be victims.

Partners in War: Female Camp Followers and Military Retainers

Though men spoke about women in disparaging terms, the men of the War of 1812 did have limited official uses for their women. Both the army of Great Britain and the United States had provided limited funding to support official female camp followers. In fact, restrictions were so severe that women might draw lots “for the privilege of enduring the rigours of active

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Great Britain allowed for six women per company to travel with regiments destined for service on foreign soil. So, the average battalion in Canada had “60 wives and approximately 100 children accompanying it” who had the status of “official dependants.” The United States provided provisions for no more than four women per company, but women were only permitted to travel with parties of larger than seventeen men. These women theoretically received support in the form of rations, transportation, and lodgings, though in actuality they worked to earn everything they were given and often had to provide for themselves beyond what the army allowed them.

The wives of officers and social elites had options available to them which were not present for women associated with the rank and file. According to Mayer, “Officers rarely, if ever, ordered their visiting wives to the same labor assigned to the other women with the army; they were also more attentive to their desires. Officers’ wives were deemed to be ladies, and there was a distinct difference in the courtesies accorded them in garrison and on the march.”

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8 Articles of War, Military Laws, and Rules and Regulations for the Army of the United States (Washington City: E. de Krafft, Printer, 1817), 38; 84.


10 Holly A. Mayer, Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 15. For details, please see Lydia Bacon’s journals details her travels through the American Northwest with her husband, quartermaster Lieutenant Josiah Bacon: Mary M. Crawford, “Mrs. Lydia B. Bacon’s Journal, 1811-1812,” Indiana Magazine of History 40, no. 4 (December
As such, the presence of an officer’s wife, or another relative deemed to be a lady, might improve his wartime lifestyle at relatively little cost to her.

Young bachelor Captain William Merritt looked forward to being visited by his sister, Mrs. Gordon and her husband. He saw her company as “seasonable reinforcement for me,” but he was also awarded a better set of living quarters when Mrs. Gordon was visiting, so that she could be entertained in the style it was thought that she deserved. In exchange, Mrs. Gordon had only to relax and provide her brother with companionship, before she escaped back to her normal, civilian life.

In contrast, poorer women connected to enlisted men found themselves living in overcrowded barracks which offered little or no privacy. Married couples among were permitted to tack up a sheet around their bunk, giving them an illusion of privacy in shared quarters, and British women also shared overcrowded ships with their husbands traveling to North America.

Women who moved with the troops were expected to march with the baggage rather than with their husbands. They might be permitted to ride with the supplies if there was room – though the supply wagons were generally better left to children who could not physically keep

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up with these demands. If an attack came while a regiment was on the move, its dependents could be given no special protection.

The rations provided to women came at a dramatically reduced ratio. Typically, they received half of a man’s ration, and children were given only an eighth of what a man received. Rations were liable to be reduced even further during supply shortages, or even cut off completely, because an army’s primary focus was the fighting fitness of its soldiers. And when supplies were short, the armies of Great Britain and the United States prioritized feeding the dependents of their Native allies over feeding the dependents of American, British or Canadian soldiers. This was because the loyalty of Native men was assumed, often correctly, to be contingent upon the ability of Great Britain or the United States to fulfill their promises of food. Women for whom an army could no longer care for would simply be sent away or left behind as the army moved to a new location, as it was assumed that the rules of civilized warfare would keep them safe from enemy forces.¹⁴

Thus, under ideal circumstances, soldiers finished a march and were provided with food, but their “official dependants” finished the same journey and then had to find a way to supplement their army rations in order to fully feed themselves and any dependents. And resources in the surrounding locality could be increasingly scarce since, as they traveled, “the number of women so allotted was often exceeded by those subsequently gathered by the forces along the way and in garrison.”¹⁵ There were more women competing for supplies, and for the work which earned one the right to them. Furthermore, all of this had to be done without

¹⁴ The Loyal and Patriotic Society had some funding available for women whose husbands had been killed in battle. So, for Canadian women left in this position, at least, there was some chance of receiving money to cover traveling expenses home. Peggy Dymond Leavy, Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812 (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012), 145.
draining military resources, because damaging army efficiency could get one dismissed, potentially stranded far from home and whatever family she had aside from her husband.16

Women who traveled with the armies were subject to medical exams, either scheduled or at a whim, which looked for signs of venereal disease. Any woman found to be infected or who refused to be tested would be denied their allotted portion of the rations and sent away to protect the health of and fighting strength of the soldiers.17 Additionally, married women discovered to be committing adultery were also drummed out of camp, because infidelity endangered troop morale and had the potential to spread undiscovered venereal diseases.18 In general, so few women were present that they “were often a source of contention.”19 Therefore, the “bad soldier’s wife must be got rid of as soon as possible,” but a woman who proved herself “industrious” and of “good character” could be tolerated.20

16 Lieutenant General Murray was required to “explain the grounds upon which I directed a whole ration to be issued to the women belonging to the American Prisoners of War, I have to state that Capt Kempt suggested to me that half a ration was insufficient for these women who had not the same means of earning a livelihood as the Soldiers Wives.” Prevost, through his secretary, Ensign Freer, disagreed with his reasoning and an order was issued that “The Women of American Prisoners in future to receive half a ration each.” George Murray to Noah Freer, Military Secretary, 8 February 1812, in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, Vol. III, Part Two, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1926), 840. 17 Williams, Judy O’Grady and the Colonel’s Lady, 43-44; Harvey E. Brown, The Medical Department of the United States Army from 1775 to 1873, (Washing D.C.: Surgeon General’s Office, 1873), 98; Cromton, Women Beyond the Frontier, 5. 18 Camp Meigs General Orders, 1 August 1813, in Daniel Cushing, “Orderly Book of Cushing’s Company, 2nd U.S. Artillery April, 1813 – February, 1814,” in Fort Meigs and the War of 1812: Orderly Book of Cushing’s Company and Personal Diary of Captain Daniel Cushing, edited by Harlow Lindley (Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, 1975), 55. 19 Soldiers were severely discouraged from marrying and had to get the permission of their commanding officers to do so. Men who married without permission were harshly punished and their wives were ostracized. Micheline Dumont, Michele Jean, Marie Lavigne, and Jennifer Stoddart, Quebec Women: A History, trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill (Toronto: The Women’s Press, 1987), 92. 20 If a soldier approached his commanding officer asking permission to marry woman who did not seem suitable for army life, the officer was supposed to remind the soldier of the hardships which she would be exposed to, thus attempting to halt the nuptials for her sake. Noel T. St. John Williams, Judy O’Grady and the Colonel’s Lady: The Army Wife and Camp Follower Since 1660 (London: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1988), 12; 18. Failure to dismiss a woman of bad character could be disastrous for the officer in charge. On 14 July 1813, Captain James Basden was relieved of his duty because he permitted “several instances of irregularity and misconduct…. In violation of all regard to decency and decorum, [he] encumbered the brigade of boats by bringing up Under his protection a female of improper character.” Quoted in Cecilia Morgan, “Gender, Loyalty and Virtue in a Colonial Context: The War of 1812 and Its Aftermath in Upper Canada,” in Gender, War, and Politics: Transatlantic
Women of the lower-classes were asked to provide domestic labor to the army. It was an official policy of American army hospitals to “be supplied with one or more female attendants, at the discretion of the senior surgeon.” These women had to “scour and cleanse the bunks and floors, to wash the blankets, bed sacks, and cloths of the patients of the patients, to cook the victuals of the sick, and to keep clean and in good orders the cooking utensils.” Women were hired on to do the washing as well, and could earn as much as twenty five cents per dozen pieces if they provided their own soap and fourteen cents if the soap was provided by the army, while female hospital attendants earned up to six dollars a month and were provided with one ration every day.

Unofficially, women were also sought after for mending and laundry services, for their cooking, and to nurse the sick and injured. In fact, according to Walter Hart Blumenthal, camp women were a “recognized and mayhap needed element” of army life, and there was always women’s work that needed to be done. This work might be given to their husbands or other relatives, but often their domestic services were rented out to others in the regiment who had no wife with them, which helped supplement their husband’s pay.

Despite this, women were not valued equally to men, and were more likely be dismissed or abandoned, treated as disposable rather than valuable. Being officially attached to the army was physically arduous and labor intensive for women, and women who traveled with the armies

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21 Female hospital attendants could not be paid more than six dollars a month, and they were to receive one ration every day. Brown, *The Medical Department of the United States Army from 1775 to 1873*, 97. Also quoted in Cron ton, *Women Beyond the Frontier*, 3.

22 Cron ton, *Women Beyond the Frontier*, 3. Bedding was provided for washerwomen at a ratio of one woman per seventeen men. *Articles of War, Military Laws, and Rules and Regulations for the Army of the United States*, 63.


had to be capable of handling the same degree of hardship as the men, though they did so with fewer means while having to continually prove themselves useful. On top of that, army life exposed women directly to battles, putting them at greater risk of injury and captivity.

Theoretically, female prisoners of war were supposed to be quickly and simply paroled if taken by members of the regular armies or militia forces of Britain or the United States. For example, in Illinois Territory, a company of American scouts came across what they believed to be two Native men and fired upon them. Despite wearing male dress, one of these individuals was female, and “when the whites surrounded her and knew her sex, all was over. She cried terribly and was taken prisoner and at last delivered over to her nation,” though her male companion had been shot and killed. In actuality, however, women experienced hardships in captivity as well. The aftermath of the Fort Dearborn Massacre offers insight into the sufferings that women survived as prisoner of war.

Mrs. Susan Simmons’s husband John and their three-year old son were killed during the battle. She and her infant daughter Susan survived and were taken captive by Natives living at Green Bay. They were forced to run a gauntlet made up of women and children who had lost

26 The battle was dubbed a massacre because it was initially believed that all residents of Fort Dearborn had been killed. Once it was realized that captives had been taken, the questions was how to go about ransoming them. If a ransom was not readily paid, the prisoners might be moved further west, farther away from “civilized” territory. Thus, a relief fund was established to help speed the release of those taken captive by Augustus B. Woodward, the former justice of Michigan Territory. After the British took control of the territory, Woodward refused to take any official positions offered to him by Procter and he never called court to session, but he remained in Detroit the entire time hoping that he might be able “to intercede for my suffering countrymen; to save their lives, their persons, from the victorious and insulting savages; to preserve the remnants of their little properties from pillage; to aid, in the means of departing, those who will go to find the standard of their country where her power is yet readministered, and her glory un tarnished, and to uphold and comfort those whom stern necessity compels, or resolution prompts, to bear the full fury of the storm.” Quoted in Anthony J. Yanik, *The Fall and Recapture of Detroit in the War of 1812: In Defense of William Hull* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 141.

French fur traders Louis Buisson (Archange Ouilmette’s brother-in-law) and Francois Des Pins, long time residents at Chicago realized they could profit from the process and started actively looking for captives. They ransomed Martha and Sally Leigh and Mary Burns and her daughter. Keating, *Rising Up From Indian Country*, 168-169.
someone to the Americans, but were then adopted, fed, and cared for by an older Native woman before being taken to Mackinac to be ransomed to the British. Simmons believed that “the Indians delight in tormenting prisoners who show any emotion,” and resolved to conceal her emotions to protect herself and her daughter. She did so, despite being “lightly clad, suffering from cold, fatigue, and mal-nutrition,” through the gauntlet and captivity and while carrying Susan over nine hundred miles, from Green Bay back to Chicago, “then around the entire eastern shore of the lake to Michilimackinac,” and then to Detroit, where she was finally ransomed.

Though she had first been taken prisoner on 15 August 1812, Mrs. Margaret McKillip Helm was not ransomed to the United States until 13 February 1813. She was delivered from Fort George to Fort Niagara under a flag of truce, along with five other prisoners of war, including two other women, in an appalling condition. Lieutenant Colonel George McFeely described her as “so overcome with cold that she could not speak, indeed she was to all appearance dead” and as “a very delicate little body, heart broken, and far gone in consumption.” Helm had been separated from her husband, Lieutenant Lina Helm, since August and had spent four months living with the Potawatomi, whose treatment she spoke of in glowing terms, before being ransomed to British officers, who she spoke of “with resentment and contempt.” It took more than two weeks for Helm to recover enough to travel home.

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28 From Detroit, Simmons traveled down to Fort Meigs, which she reached in March of 1813, where she gained passage on a government supply wagon back home to Piqua, Ohio, which she finally reached in mid-April. At some point before her journey began, Simmons was “given over to an Indian ‘mother’ who feeds her, bathes wounds, [and] allows her to rest.” Pierre Berton, *The American Invasion of Canada: The War of 1812’s First Year* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 1980), 195-196.
So, officially, women were required to be subservient and useful in ways which allowed them to contribute their femininity to a system which expected men to perform their own roles in a most traditionally masculine way. Their army roles were both demanding and restrictive, and potentially very dangerous. However, traveling with an army, whether a benefit or a detriment, was not an opportunity for every woman. Many women were left home while their male relations went off to fight, and these women actively contributed to the war as well.

Mothering a Nation: Homefront Supporters

Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall explained in their *Gender, War, and Politics: Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775-1830*, that “the declared ‘national emergency’ of war… opened opportunities for women in public life previously closed to them. They were allowed to expand their ‘motherly duties’ beyond their families because the ‘fatherland was in danger.’”30 Women who remained at home had opportunities to contribute to the war in ways which allowed them to switch the focus of their nurturing talents from their families to their nations. They clothed, fed, sheltered, and nursed men in need. Sometimes these were friends or relations, but just as often they were strangers, or even enemies. As with official army women, they provided services which bettered and eased the lives of the men who purported to be their protectors.

In Cincinnati, an April 1812 request for blanket donations was specifically addressed to women and seemed targeted to strum at their presumed maternal heartstrings: “Mother! Sisters! Wives! – recollect that the men in whose favor this appeal is made, have connections as near and as dear as any which can bind you to life.”31 On 25 September 1812, William Henry Harrison

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sent an appeal to the families of his Kentucky soldiers that asked, “Will the amiable fairer sex suffer their brave defenders to be mutilated by the want of mittens and socks, which they can with so little exertion, procure them?”\textsuperscript{32} Harrison’s plea specifically addressed prescribed gender roles and reminded the women of Kentucky that they needed to conform to them – to be the “amiable fairer sex” to the men’s “brave defender” – so that they could continue to be protected.

Such appeals seemed to have worked. A Chillicothe, Ohio man bragged to a friend in Washington about how “even the ladies of Chillicothe set their eastern friends an example of pure patriotism, being engaged all day Sunday making hunting shirts and leggings for their husbands, and brothers, amongst whom are of our most respectable citizens.”\textsuperscript{33} Elias Darnall remarked in a 25 January 1813 journal entry that a shipment of clothing had arrived from Kentucky and that, “the ladies who sent this clothing deserve the highest encomiums. If it had not been for their unexampled exertions, we must have suffered beyond conception.”\textsuperscript{34} On 11 February 1813, Kentucky militiamen serving in the North Western Army were reminded by their congressmen that their “fellow citizens and fair country women have endeavored as far as in their power, by voluntary contributions to assist in shielding you from the inclemency of an inhospitable climate.”\textsuperscript{35} Lewis Cass reported to Thomas Worthington that troops landed at Cleveland had been “scattered to the four winds of Heaven. Literally poor naked and sick,” before “much expense was incurred by charitable individuals in many places for medicine,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} William Henry Harrison to Kentuckians, 25 September 1812, quoted in Sandy Antal, \textit{A Wampum Denied: Procter’s War of 1812} (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997), 133.
\end{itemize}
medical attendance, and provisions.”36 In Fairport, Ohio, Mrs. Bartlett and her daughters, “with the true patriotic spirit of ’76, spun, wove, and made garments,” which they furnished to the men leaving town for military service.37 A nameless woman from Windham, Ohio knitted socks for the soldiers, an activity which she had done during the Revolutionary War and would do again in the Civil War, as she lived to be one hundred four years old.38

Cooking was another traditionally maternal job that women readily performed for the benefit of the soldiers. In Cleveland, sisters Laura, Merry, and Polly Carter “cooked night as well as day” for the steady stream of soldiers entering their city, and all three women long after made “refer[ence] to the barrels of bread they had then baked – often in the hours of the night.”39 Margaret Stow, of Summit County, Ohio, maintained a large kettle outside her home in order to cook for soldiers who passed through town.40 At Moraviantown, near present-day Chatham, Ontario, Margaret Schnall, the wife of missionary John Schnall, did her best to provide food for the starving Kentuckians streaming into her town on 5 October 1813, and she reportedly cooked for them “until her cupboard was literally bare.”41 A “very communicative old lady” brewed up tea for U.S. Lieutenant Reynold Kirby and his company in the middle of the night as they waited

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41 The situation was apparently so desperate that the men were ransacking beehives, uprooting vegetable gardens, and were even willing to steal and eat unbaked dough. Despite Schnall’s kindness, Moraviantown ended up ransacked by the Americans, who hoped to find stores of documents left behind by Procter during his hasty departure, and then, on 7 October, torched. Antal, A Wampum Denied, 355; Pierre Berton, Flames Across the Border: 1813-1814 (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1981), 205.
for their transportation to be readied. And during the 23 May 1813 Battle of Fort George, while the American bombardment was still happening, Mary Henry made numerous trips onto the battlefield to deliver sustenance to her Canadian countrymen.

Some women opened their homes to soldiers as well as their kitchens. United Empire Loyalist settler John DeCew (alternatively spelled De Cew, DeCue, and De Coo) was taken prisoner in May 1813, after the Battle of Fort George, and sent to the United States as a prisoner of war. In his absence, his home was turned into a supply house for arms and ammunition and Mrs. DeCew and their children moved their lives onto the second floor as the home’s lower level became the de facto headquarters of Lieutenant James FitzGibbon.

Mrs. Hopkins invited a pair of officers to stay overnight at her Henderson’s Harbor home. An unnamed woman and children living at Bador Harbor found themselves unexpectedly sharing their fire with a group of soldiers who had been caught up in a storm too violent for their boat to handle. In St. Davids, Upper Canada, Mrs. Laws provided William Merritt and his companion, John Ball with a pair of red coats, which had been left in her home by visiting soldiers. Merritt deemed them “a necessary precaution to prevent being shot by our

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own Indians,” while he and Ball were recovering a supply of medicine taken by American soldiers.  

Archange Ouilmette and Sheshi Buisson, a pair of Métis sisters, were among the Chicagoans who stayed in the city when Fort Dearborn was abandoned, not feeling the need to flee with the inhabitants of the fort. They sheltered Alexander Robinson, a trader who had been heading to Chicago to buy corn, and Sergeant William Griffith, who had been sent back for medical supplies and horses before the attack. Days later, they took in and protected Margaret Helm, who had been ransomed but was still drawing ill will as the wife of an American officer, by first disguising her as a Métis woman and then hiding her inside a feather mattress when the Ouilmette home was searched by a group of disgruntled Natives.  

The occupation of nursing was taken up from home too, as women turned their homes into makeshift field hospitals. In York, Upper Canada, Mary Warren Breakenridge and other local women took wounded American officers into their homes following an April 1813 attack by the United States. After the December 1813 burning of Niagara, the lighthouse tended by Mary Henry’s husband, Dominic, was left standing. She used the building to provide medical care, shelter, and food to those left in need. The widowed Kakima Burnett took the Healds into

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47 William Hamilton Merritt, “Skirmish With Indians on Expedition for Recovery of Medicine,” *Journal of Events Principally on the Detroit and Niagara Frontiers During the War of 1812* (St. Catharines, Ontario: The Historical Society of B.N.A., 1863), 37; That Laws had the coats laying about suggests that her home was a frequent visiting place for officers, as such a home might have a “carpet parlor… adorned the whole day with red.” Quoted in Dianne Graves, *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women and the War of 1812* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2012), 75.


49 Gareth A. Newfield, “Medical Care of American POWs During the War of 1812,” *Canadian Military History* 17, no. 1 (2008), 54.

50 After the war ended, Henry’s actions were recognized by the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada, who called her a “heroine not to be frightened,” and awarded her 25 pounds. “Mary Henry, One of Canada’s Forgotten 1812 Heroes.”
her home at St. Joseph to let them recover from their injuries after their ransom, despite the danger that housing them could have brought.\textsuperscript{51}

In Cleveland, Mrs. Harriet Wallace’s tavern was often used as a hospital during the war, and, when the city was under threat of attack in August 1812, “she would not seek safety leaving the invalids to face such an ordeal alone.”\textsuperscript{52} Wallace was not alone, however. Julia Morgan Walworth was also in the city during the course of the war, “fac[ing] all danger because her husband was too ill to move, and there were sick soldiers in town dependent upon” the care she provided.\textsuperscript{53} And, along with Walworth, “Mrs. Dr. Long and one or two other ladies… peremptorily refused to leave. If they could do nothing else they could nurse the wounded in case of battle.”\textsuperscript{54}

Women also sometimes traveled to the battlefield, bringing their care to injured relations on site or going to search for missing husbands, brothers, or sons to bring home to recover. Mrs. Coleman, of Ashtabula, Ohio learned that her husband – ironically, an army surgeon - was gravely ill at a Cleveland hospital and likely to die. Nursing an infant and accompanied by a

\textsuperscript{51} The Healds were later sent on to Mackinac and surrendered to the British. Ann Durkin Keating, \textit{Rising Up From Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 164.

\textsuperscript{52} In 1814, Wallace gave birth to her daughter, Emmeline, in the tavern. “Cleveland, Cuyahoga County,” ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, in vol. 5 of \textit{Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve}, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 805 (Cleveland: The Executive Committee of the Women’s Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1924), 805.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{The Pioneer Families of Cleveland, 1796-1840, Volume One}, ed. Wickham, 120; 92. In Michigan Territory governor Lewis Cass’ mind, the miserable condition of the American troops landed at Cleveland – “scattered to the four winds of Heaven. Literally poor naked and sick” – was only alleviated by an incredible expense on the behalf of altruistic women willing to furnish them with medicine, medical attention, and other much needed provisions. Lewis Cass to Thomas Worthington, 4 February 1813, in \textit{Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. III}, ed. Knopf, 169.

\textsuperscript{54} Dr. David Long first came to Cleveland from Washington County, New York, in 1810. He was the first permanent physician in the county. 16 August 1812 \textit{History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio. In three parts: Part First. - General History of the County. Part Second. - History of Cleveland. Part Third. – History of the Townships. With Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers}, ed. Crisfield Johnson (Philadelphia: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1879) 56, 59. In 10 May 1813, a company of men under Captain Stanton Sholes was stationed in Cleveland. Upon their arrival, they found “a number of sick and wounded soldiers there, with very poor accommodations, some of whom had been there since the time of Hull’s surrender.” Sholes arranged to have a twenty by thirty framed hospital constructed, “covered with a water tight roof and floored with chestnut bark.” Ibid., 61.
female neighbor, Coleman set out on horseback for Cleveland to care for him. At Lundy’s Lane (present day Niagara Falls, Ontario), during the truce that followed the Battle of Lundy’s Lane, a New Yorker came up to offer ministrations to her dying husband, a sixty-year-old state militiaman who she found languishing at “an impromptu medical clinic.” At his bedside, she reportedly raged “O that the King and the President were both here this moment to see the injury their quarrels lead to – they surely would never go to war without a cause that they could give as a reason to God at the last day, for thus destroying the creatures that He hath made in his own image.” After the 13 October 1812 Battle of Queenston Heights, both American Besty Doyle and Canadian Laura Secord were in Queenston, Upper Canada looking for their husbands in the areas where combat had just wound down.

Women also provided nonmedical comforts in the form of emotional support. During the Battle of Lake Erie, Huron, Ohio resident Clarissa Smith found herself standing on the lakeshore, watching the battle, next to a man who had deserted from William Hull’s army. While they could hear the cannon fire and see smoke rising out above the lake, neither could ascertain who had emerged victorious once the battle was over. The man was terrified and sure that he would be hung if the United States had lost the battle. Smith took the man’s hand and walked with him along the beach, distracting him until news came of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry’s victory.

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55 Coleman was met and welcomed into the Cleveland community by Long. Dr. Coleman ended up surviving his injury and the Coleman’s and the Longs became friends over the course of his recovery, remaining so after the war. The Pioneer Families of Cleveland, 1796-1840, Volume One, ed. Wickham, 120; 92. In Michigan Territory governor Lewis Cass’ mind, the miserable condition of the American troops landed at Cleveland – “scattered to the four winds of Heaven. Literally poor naked and sick” – was only alleviated by an incredible expense on the behalf of altruistic women willing to furnish them with medicine, medical attention, and other much needed provisions. Lewis Cass to Thomas Worthington, 4 February 1813, in Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Vol. III, ed. Knopf, 169.

56 Quoted in Berton, Flames Across the Border, 345.

57 Quoted in “Huron, Erie County,” ed. Mrs. Eliza B. Purdee, in vol. 3 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 563-574 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 574.
In York, Upper Canada, women found a way to send their trust and support into battle with their men. Following the surrender of Fort Detroit, some of the town’s “leading young ladies” decided to create flags to commemorate the Third Regiment York Militia’s involvement. Mary Warren Baldwin created the design and the work was done in Catherine McGill’s home. The women presented their work to the Third York in March of 1813, along with a speech informing the militiamen that the flags should be seen as a “public testimony of their gratitude to their countrymen returning from victory,” as “a proof that they [i.e., the women] strongly participate in that generous patriotism which burns with so pure a flame through the Province,” and as a reminder that the women had “unlimited confidence” in the effectiveness of their protection. 58

Rebecca Hubbs, a Quaker minister, was traveling through Pennsylvania in August 1814 when she came upon a camp of soldiers in New Lancaster. She noticed they were getting ready to go into battle and sent one of her male traveling companions to their commanding officer to see if he would be receptive to a visit before they departed. He answered in the affirmative, and the following morning’s turnout satisfied Hubbs, who noted that “He [God] was pleased to own the meeting with his living presence to the humbling tendering of many, in particular, some of the poor soldiers, as well as some of the officers in their shining apparel.” 59

Mary Wollstonecraft once “compared professional soldiers with women insofar as both were ‘fond of dancing, crowded rooms, adventures, and ridicule.’” 60 And Mayer observed that,

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during the Revolutionary War, “Women figured prominently in the social lives of most officers. The officers not only courted and called upon the female relations accompanying their colleagues but mixed with the women in the communities through which they passed.” This held true during the War of 1812 as well. Women provided entertainment and socialization that brought a sense of normality to two and a half years of fighting.

Captain John Scott’s letters, written while his regiment was traveling around upper New York, frequently asked that his respects be passed along to various “fair Ladies” of his acquaintance and Scott remarked that his friend Lieutenant Jacob Howell was “as usual employed in making acquaintances with the ladies of the neighborhood. I think he has the best faculty of forming acquaintances with the ladies of any man I ever knew.” Merritt also reported of entertainments provided by women in the Niagara region in his journal: “We went round the Lake Road and spend the afternoon with the ladies at Mrs. McNabb’s. Miss Symington, Crooks, and most of the ladies had rendezvoused there.”

In Mantua, Ohio, Mrs. Letitia Edwards organized the town’s first Fourth of July celebration. Edwards also decided to use the occasion to celebrate the homecoming of the Mantua men who had gone to war, including her husband. In more populated localities, such entertainment was more readily found and not reserved to special occasion.

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61 Mayer, Belonging to the Army, 55.
In Fredericton, New Brunswick, John Le Couteur found himself steadily occupied over the course of the conflict. He felt that “the Balls and Grigreys [gregorys], a local name for routs or cards and Ladies’ parties, were incessant.” On 31 December 1812, he observed that “I was at Thirty five dinners, evening parties, or balls since I came up here on the 4th of September.” This sort of social activity seems to have been common across his wartime experiences, and his journal entry of 3 November 1814 mentioned his enjoying a “very gay” dance which had been hosted by his Kingston, Ontario landlady, Mrs. Elizabeth Robison. And even when Le Couteur and the other single men among the officers at decided to host a ball while they were in Fredericton, it was “the Ladies, our friends” who made the refreshments and decorations.

Women Who Spoke Their Minds: Instigators, Resistors, and Protectors

But women were not always sources of support during the War of 1812. When they found their lives intruded upon by the enemy, many women attempted a verbal resistance and called upon the soldiers or militiamen to remember, and conform to, their own gender roles.

Buffalo widow Margaret St. John, who still provided for eight of her eleven children, sent away the six youngest with their elder sister Mrs. Bemis and her family and remained in Buffalo to protect her property with daughters Maria and Sarah and an elderly employee named Pettingill.

65 John Le Couteur, “23 October 1812,” in Merry Hearts Make Light Days: The War of 1812 Journal of Lieutenant John Le Couteur, 104th Foot, ed. Donald Graves (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 78; John Le Couteur, “31 December 1812,” in Ibid.; John Le Couteur, “3 November 1814,” in Ibid., 216. Le Couteur fancied himself something of a ladies man. One of his first actions upon arriving at St. John was to flirt with a woman he deemed “that sweet one.” She turned out to be Mrs. General George Stracey Smyth, who was both his commanding officer and his host whilst in town. John Le Couteur, “13 July 1812,” in Ibid., 72. Donald Graves, in his introduction to the text, puts it thusly, “John Le Couteur was a very romantic young man and his journal contains so many affairs of the youthful heart that it risks straining the reader’s patience.” Ibid., 13. Le Couteur himself claims to have just been in pursuit of “anything to make service lighter.” John Le Couteur, “11 July 1814,” in Ibid., 171.

66 John Le Couteur, “28 January 1813,” in Ibid., 78. Not all of this interaction was positive for the women involved. An acquaintance of Le Couteur’s named Mills got a maid in Mrs. Shore’s home pregnant. Mills attempted to receive and was denied, permission to marry from their commanding officer, Captain George Shore, as was his prerogative. John Le Couteur, “13 November 1814,” in Ibid., 216. Officers were to deny permission if the young lady did not seem to be the “right sort,” and any man who decided to marry without permission would find his wife barred from barracks and camps, everything possible done to see that their marriage was not fulfilling. Blumenthal, Women in America, 37. In this case, both the woman and the baby ended up dying.
On 30 December 1813, when British soldiers set fire to her hotel and barn, the St. John women and Pettingill put out the flames and saved the hotel, as well as the Lovejoy home across the street.

Mrs. St. John then went to see General Riall, demanded protection for her property, and was given an armed guard for her hotel. Unfortunately, when the British came again on 1 January 1814, St. John’s words did not have the same effect. This time, when she “complained to the British about their cruel burning of her town, she was told, ‘we have left you with one roof, and that is more than the Americans left for our widows [at Newark] when they came over.’” St. John was granted the family cottage, but the soldiers finished the work they had started on the St. John hotel and the Lovejoy house, which was burned with Sally Lovejoy’s body inside.

When General Henry Proctor ordered a retreat from Fort Amherstburg on 27 September 1813, the surrounding town was left virtually deserted of men. When William Henry Harrison’s forces passed through in pursuit of Proctor, they were met by “the women of Amherstburg [who] chastised them and pleaded with them not to burn the town.” Their pleas were effective, and the American soldiers left Malden and Fort Amherstburg unmolested.

In Long Point, Ontario, Mrs. Glasgo “intrected [sic] for one of her cows” with General Peter B. Porter, who responded by threatening her with a horse-whip. Also at Long Point, Mrs.

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67 Later that afternoon, the Lovejoy home, across the street, was fired as well, and the four were able to rescue Sally Lovejoy’s body and “seeing that the fire was making slow progress, they brought water and put it out.” Merton M. Wilner, Niagara Frontier: A Narrative and Documentary History, vol. I (Chicago: The S.J. Clark Publishing Co., 1931), 252-253.

68 Leavy, Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812, 129; Berton, Flames Across the Border, 263; 268. An estimated tent to twelve building remained standing after the events of 30 December, but fears that American troops would have enough cover to move back in to the city necessitated a second strike. Wilner, Niagara Frontier, 253-255.


Ryerse, a widowed mother, also confronted American soldiers who had targeted her property. Her daughter, Amelia, sixteen at the time, recounted the event:

Two men stepped from the ranks, selected some large chips, came into the room where we were standing and took coals from the hearth, without speaking. My mother knew instinctively what they were going to do. She went out and asked to see the commanding officer, a gentleman rode up to her and said he was the person she asked for. She entreated Him to spare her property and said that she was a widow with a young family. He answered civilly & respectfully and regretted that his orders were to Burn….\textsuperscript{71}

Ryerse could not convince the men to spare the entirety of her property because they feared it would be used to house British troops, but her words were enough to save their house.

When trying to assemble a militia out of the inhabitants of Norfolk County, Ontario for Isaac Brock, Colonel Thomas Talbot encountered more than a little resistance. He expected to meet with approximately 100 men to march out, but instead he encountered “a large assembly of the Farmers with their Women, who upon my approach addressed me, by declaring that their Men should not March.” Though Talbot and local magistrate Mr. Bemer agreed that “the measure of withholding any of the Militia from Long Point was highly improper,” could do little to dissuade the crowd. In the end, Talbot was only able to convince about twenty men to march out, and he ultimately decided to send them all back, as he was not fully convinced they could follow orders.\textsuperscript{72}

In addition to speaking in the defense of their homes and families, women also openly chastised soldiers and militiamen for perceived moral wrongdoings. Their gender allowed them to do so in situations where men might have faced backlash for speaking out. Mrs. Grant Powell,


an American-born Canadian, berated an American soldier she found raiding her larder and eating the remains of an aborted dinner party at her Little York (present day Toronto) home on 26 April 1813. She advised him to pick up and go home, and then laughed upon learning that his civilian job was working on one of the farms owned by her father, Major Bleecker. Matriarchal firebrand St. John scolded a group of American soldiers fleeing the burning Buffalo, demanding them to turn and fight and “let [Major] General [Amos] Hall go, he must be an awful coward.” 73 When the British soldiers who had forcibly occupied her husband’s law office left, Mrs. Hubbell bid them farewell, and reminded them that their behavior had been shameful: “Good-buy, sirs, for a very little while, but I know you’ll be back and hanging your heads as you come.” In response, Hubbell was told that her remarks would not have been tolerated if she had been male. 74

Women were also not uninformed about the political and social realities of the war raging around them. During the summer of 1811, Mrs. Jonathan Sidway gave her opinion of the fraught situation occurring in upstate New York, as the state’s Federalists and Democratic-Republicans fought over whether to go to war. In Sidway’s opinion, “Politics ran high in spirit, and personal animosities were fearful. The social and communal frenzy was beyond description; all giving advice, and no one taking it; no concentration, no head, no effective purpose; all were bad people but those who were criticizing.” 75

Elizabeth Selby astutely considered the cost that the war was likely to have on Canada’s civilian population and was the one who came up with the idea for the creation of the Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada. She proposed her plan to her father, Receiver General Prideaux Selby, and convinced him to carry her idea up the chain of influence and see the

73 Pierre Berton says that there is circumstantial evidence that St. John was actually speaking to Hall himself. Berton, Flames Across the Border, 41; 55; 265.
74 Graves, In the Midst of Alarms, 295-296.
75 Quoted in Wilner, Niagara Frontier, 189.
organization’s establishment through to completion, in December 1812. The Loyal and Patriotic Society provided charitable aid to militia families and militiamen who suffered losses during the war and gave official recognition, in the form of a medal, to individuals who distinguished themselves in the defense of Upper Canada.\textsuperscript{76}

In the immediate aftermath of Fort Dearborn, it was Mrs. Eleanor Lytle McKillip Kinzie, whose husband John was a fur trader in the area, who saw that Mrs. Heald had been separated from her husband and would be taken away into captivity. Kinzie herself had been taken by the Seneca and spent four years as a member of the family of Chief Cornplanter before being freed. Knowing what Heald might face, Kinzie ordered Jean Baptiste Chandonnai, one of her own husband’s clerks to arrange Heald’s transfer to the same group that held her husband, so that his position might protect them both.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1816, workers rebuilding Fort Dearborn reported encountering an English speaking man who said he was a Fort Dearborn survivor who had been spirited away and taken down the river by an old Potawatomi woman who wanted to repay kindesses he had done her.\textsuperscript{78} On 23 October 1812, a group of New York militiamen surprised the British at St. Regis, capturing the whole party and all of their supplies save for “only one Lieut. [who] was able to escape, an Indian squaw paddled him of in a boat.”\textsuperscript{79} Across the region, Kentuckian Timothy Mallory, a survivor of the January 1813 Battle of Frenchtown, found himself adopted into a Potawatomi family wanting to replace a son who had died in battle. During his time in captivity, Mallory said


\textsuperscript{77} Later on, after the Healds had purchased their freedom, they headed to Detroit where Mrs. Heald’s grace, kindness, and beauty gained her the notice of a fifteen year old John Richardson, who much later used her as the bases of the heroine of \textit{Wau-nan-gee}. Keating, \textit{Rising Up From Indian Country}, 164-168.

\textsuperscript{78} He later married the women, and then her daughters after she passed away. He reported being happy with his life and had little interest in returning to white society. Berton, \textit{The American Invasion of Canada}, 197.

that his life was repeatedly preserved by the Potawatomi women, who hid him when the men
were drunk enough that his complexion might have drawn their wrath. Fellow Frenchtown
captives, John Davenport and Elias Darnall, reported similar experiences.80

Though men like Mallory, Davenport, and Darnall may not have known it, their lives had
been protected by Potawatomi females prior to the above instances too. Native women were
instrumental in assuring that they survived the initial battle. According to Joan Gundersen,
Native women “played important roles in determining which captives lived or died and oversaw
rites of adoption since family lineages were determined by female lines.”81 It had been the Native
women who had had the first say in their fates off the battlefield.

And, though their social structure had somewhat changed, owing to contact with the
Europeans, many Native women still made political contributions to their societies. According to
Morgan, Native women “had a significant voice in deciding whether or not their society would
engage in war in the first place.”82 In the Mackinaw region, a 1826 ceremony memorializing
Pawquawkoman, an Ottawa chief who was also known as Amable Chevalier, recalled that, as the
Ottawa were discussing whether to take part in the coming war, the women “s'est mise a chanter
la guerre, et tous les autres Sauvages de Michilimackinac voyant la femme chanter la guerre”

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80 Elias Darnall, “A Journal, Containing an accurate & interesting account of the hardships, sufferings,
battles, Defeat, & captivity of those heroic Kentucky Volunteers & Regulars, commanded by General Winchester, in
the year 1812.... 1813. Also Two Narratives, by Men, that were Wounded in the Battles on the River Raisin, and
Taken Captive by the Indians,” in The Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captives, Volume

81 Initially, “when the British began negotiating with Indian leaders during the Seven Years’ War for the
return of captives, they found themselves negotiating with clan matrons.” As explained in the first chapter, European
discomfort with differing gender roles found among the Native peoples led to some reconsideration of how
interactions with Europeans should be conducted. Gundersen, To Be Useful to the World, 35.

82 Morgan, “Gender, Loyalty and Virtue in a Colonial Context,” in Gender, War, and Politics, 315.
were thus persuaded that they should go to war.\textsuperscript{83} It was this event which convinced the Ottawa to give their services to the British.

\section*{Survivors}

However, beyond helping or hindering men, a major role played by women in the War of 1812 was, simply, survivor. Peggy Dymond Leavy put it succinctly when she said that with the men gone, “those who decided to stay in their homes… hid their valuables and made sure they had enough provisions to feed their families until the conflict was over.”\textsuperscript{84} Men went away, and women “stayed home to manage on their own,” taking up the work left behind by men in addition to continuing with their own endeavors.\textsuperscript{85} They proved themselves capable of coping “not only with farm operations but with… visits from Indians who demanded food and accommodation for the night, and other unexpected hazards.”\textsuperscript{86} Warfare created a life of uncertainties in which women had to make daily assessments about the safety available to them and decided how to act or react to threats to themselves and their families. In the absence of men, women still had to survive.

A male relation might send home part of his paycheck for his family’s upkeep, but pay often came too infrequently to be depended upon, and if a male provider died, a woman might have been left waiting for money that would never come. When Captain John Scott received a letter from Mrs. Wheeler, asking for the month’s wages that had been due to her dead son, he lamented to his journal that Wheeler would spend more getting the paperwork need to process

\textsuperscript{83} My translation: …as the Ottawa were discussing whether to take part in the coming war, the women “started to sing [of] war, and all other natives at Michilimackinac seeing the women sing [of] war” were then persuaded that they should go to war. “Extract from a Memorial of Pawquawkoman, an Ottawa Chief, to [Governor General] Lord [George Ramsey] Dalhousie,” 6 November 1826, in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812}, vol. I, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1920), 454-455.

\textsuperscript{84} Leavy, \textit{Laura Secord: Heroine of the War of 1812}, 55.

\textsuperscript{85} McKenzie, \textit{Laura Secord}, 33.

\textsuperscript{86} McKenzie, \textit{Laura Secord}, 33.

I can feel for her situation, but I assure you Mother we have so many applications of the same kind by almost every mail that were we to attend to them or encourage them, our pay would not cover the cost of postage on all we would receive; and this is not for one person, nor for once, but for five years and for one hundred persons to each company. Nor are they ever satisfied; if it is not for their pay or to know whether they are alive, its to procure them a furlough: whenever they can find our an officer’s name & address, they are not at a loss for excuses to torment him.\footnote{Patrick McDonogh to Parents, 10 September 1813 in \textit{Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society: Volume V}, ed. Frank H. Severance (Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1902), 88. McDonogh had also advised his sister Anne not to “let the men’s wives torment you” for news about their husbands because all of the men had ample time to write. Patrick McDonogh to Anne McDonogh, 9 August 1813, in \textit{Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society: Volume V}, ed. Frank H. Severance, 87.}

So, earning one’s own way in the absence of a male provider might have become necessary.

For some, however, this could mean simply continuing the work they were already doing, as female entrepreneurs did exist. Since her husband’s death in 1806, Magdelaine Laframboise had been operating the family fur trading business, and she continued doing so long after the war’s end.\footnote{Born Magdelaine Marcot in 1780, Laframboise was the daughter of French fur trader Jean Baptiste Marche and Marie Neskech, the daughter of the Odawa chief Kewinaquot. She was raised in an Odawa village at Grand Haven, Michigan and married Joseph Laframboise, a French-Canadian fur trader, in 1794 or 1795. Their daughter, Josette, grew up to marry Captain Benjamin K. Pierce, the brother of President Franklin Pierce, on 2 April 1816, though she died in childbirth on 1821, decades before he took office. Keith R. Widder, \textit{Mackinac History: A Continuing Series of Illustrated Vignettes: Magdelaine Laframboise: The First Lady of Mackinac Island} (Mackinac Island State Park Commission, 2007), 3-6.} In 1808, widow Jane Marion announced in the \textit{Upper Canada Gazette} “that she intended to carry on the family ‘baking business and keeping a house of entertainment.’”\footnote{Elizabeth Jane Errington, \textit{Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840} (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 189, 199.} Also in 1808, Maria de Dieman opened the first mantua-making business in Upper Canada in York, and Mrs. Frances Murray, whose militiaman husband died on 27 April 1813 from wounds
sustained at the Battle of York, followed after her in 1810, opening a shop where she engaged in millinery work as well as mantua-making.\textsuperscript{91}

Sarah Ingersol ran a public house on the Credit River in southern Ontario during the course of the war. Her establishment was looted numerous times as the war raged on, purportedly by British troops “seeking liquor and money.”\textsuperscript{92} In Cleveland, Doan Tavern was managed by Mrs. Sarah Doan, who “was ever kind and accommodating, lending often of her own supplies of food and bedding.” Mrs. Harriet Wallace was another female tavern keeper in Cleveland during the course of the War of 1812.\textsuperscript{93}

Other women took up their husband’s work as their own. In Austinburg, Ohio, Mrs. Eliphabet Austin and her daughters, Betsy, Chloe, Florilla, Sophia, and Sibyl, “kept up business, and made improvements in their homes in the absence of their husbands.”\textsuperscript{94} In Ravenna, Ohio, Mary McKenzie Mason operated her husband’s tannery after his 1813 death.\textsuperscript{95} Likewise Polly Hayford, who lived in Canada at the time, kept her husband’s business, a grist mill, in operation. Hayford’s husband, along with other men in the neighborhood, “had been compelled to go to the


\textsuperscript{93} “Cleveland, Cuyahoga County,” ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, in vol. 5 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 807-817 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 811;815.

\textsuperscript{94} “Austinburg, Ash tabula County,” ed. Cornelia R. Fuller, in vol. 1 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 78-82 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 78.

\textsuperscript{95} Jared and Mary McKenzie Mason had moved to Ravenna, Ohio during the spring of 1810 with their four children. Once settled, Jared Mason, “sunk vats and established a tannery east of the courthouse, where the Gretzinger Black now stands.” He died during the war, in 1813, and Mary Mason continued operating the tannery, hiring on new employees John F. Wells and Jesse R. Grant “to work out the stock.” Grant fathered Ulysses S. Grant. “Ravenna, Portage County,” ed. Mrs. Emily D. McBride, in vol. 4 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 631-637 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 637.
States for refusing to swear allegiance to the King.” Hayford kept the mill running throughout the winter of 1812 to ensure that she was able to provide supplies for the families of all those who had fled.

Rachel McElroy Marshall and her children managed the harvests while her husband was in service, with Marshall also working as a midwife. Across both countries, other women followed suit with McElroy. As David and Jeanne Heidler said, “absent husbands, fathers, and sons left women and children to eke out existence on farms where only labor-intensive planting and harvesting stood between them and starvation.” Moreover, though such work had to be done to for their own survival, these women were not merely feeding themselves and their children.

It was largely women who fed the armies, and the idea that armies march on their stomachs is true. An army’s greatest “impact on the countryside comes not through fighting, but eating. This was especially true prior to the industrial era, when armies represented a concentration of people and animals exceeding that of most cities.” And if many of the farmers of both Canada and the United States were enlisted in the army or called away to serve the militia, then this work consequently benefited men too.

But, as Alan Taylor said, it was “wives [who] struggled to thresh wheat, chop wood, and tend the cattle, in addition to their usual ‘charge of nursing helpless infancy & guarding heedless

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Women who took up doing men’s work were not able to put down their own in exchange. David B. Mattern and Holly C. Shulman bill this period as “a time when a woman’s most important career decision was her choice of a husband….“ And while this may have born some truth for wealthy, white women in settled parts of the United States and Canada, matters were not so simple for women living in the unsettled parts of either nation, where “wolves, bears, and rattlesnakes dwelt… and owls and crows held mighty orgies in the forest on the hillside,” and survival was a daily struggle, or for any who were too poor to hire others to operate their households.102

When Mrs. Charles Snyder, an early resident of Poland, Ohio, was asked “what the women did in those early days, she laughed and said: ‘Do? What didn’t they do?’” Women living on the frontier were responsible for making their own linens, plucking, carding, and spinning wool, knitting, lace making. They made their own baking soda from burned corn cobs.103 Keating noted that women in fledgling Chicago – “whether family members, slaves, or ‘boundgirls’ – were responsible for baking bread, taking care of chickens, milking cows, making butter, and much more.”104 And women in cities flung far from Eastern seaports and markets had to find ways to produce for themselves necessities that their localities made it difficult to purchase or trade for, especially with trade disrupted by blockades on the Great Lakes.

104 Keating, *Rising Up From Indian Country*, 70.
During husband Alva’s absence, Sarah Day “provided for her two sons and two daughters by spinning wool and washing, mending, and sewing trousers, bonnets, gowns, gloves, and other essentials for neighboring families in exchange for provisions,” and, according to Robert A. Wheeler, Day “became a crucial part of the network of support that developed within Deerfield [Deerfield Township, Portage County, Ohio] during the war.”

Day’s journal sometimes recounted her business dealings:

My business – washing, mending; afternoon Christina Hartzell came, brought a straw bonnet to be put together; Sally Smith another ditto, of silk. Made an agreement with Christina to weave my piece and twenty yards at twenty cents a yard; was presented by Solomon [Day] a quarter of venison sent by father.

In Vienna, Ohio, Ruth Alderman and her two daughters also made a profit from their housework. The Aldermans took to spinning tow and linen cloth, which they took to the port at Ashtabula and sold for fifty cents per yard.

Emily Nash’s diary entries illustrate just how laborious and valued women’s work could be in particularly rural areas:

Mother found all the wash spinning and weaving that we could do. There were two families in Burten Mr John Ford and Mr [Eleazer] Hickock that wanted lots of spinning and weaving. Their familys were boys and wore home made clothes and pay us in any thing we wanted. Mr Ford let us have meat and lots of provisions so we made out to live and not go hungrey [SIC]. If it had not been for the women we could not get along for provisions is very high it being in the time of the war.


107 The Alderman women were used to providing for themselves. Alderman’s husband had died at some point preceding the War of 1812, and following his death she bought a seventy acre parcel of land. She and her daughters paid for the purchase entirely out of their own earnings and managed the farming of the acreage themselves. “Vienna, Trumbull County,” ed. Miss Lula E. Mackey, in vol. 4 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 656-663 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 660.

Mrs. Nash “bought the cow of John Ford and… [paid] for her in spinning and weaving she told the girls if they would help all they could they should each one have a cow of their own…. So we all worked with courag [SIC]…. We have got the cow and sheep paid for all spinning and weaving.” Mrs. Nash, Clarissa, Sabrina, and Emily, in addition to their “women’s work” also did any “men’s work” that needed done. Emily reported that, because of their situation, “farther [SIC] has to make boys of his girls…. I would yoke up the oxen and drive them to plow on harrow any thing there was to do…..” Because, ultimately, gender roles had to take second place to survival: “All had to work then or starve with hunger.”

And, of course, part of living with war is simply finding ways to maintain a sense of normalcy. Even in the midst of war, women attempted to continue their lives as normally as possible. When Betsy Fletcher, living in Jefferson, Ohio, found herself missing tea, which “was almost worth its weight in gold” owing to unavailability, her daughter arranged to give her “a very small quarter of a pound” of tea from Erie, Pennsylvania. Fletcher stretched out her short supply by “alternat[ing] a cup with a good smell of it from the canister.” On 28 September 1812, Hannah Hall returned home to a burned house and looted dishes. In response, she crafted a kitchenette from the woods surrounding the homestead. She “established her kitchen in a hallow sycamore stub” and used “fresh white ash chips for plates” and “handleless knives and forks

109 Ibid.
112 “Jefferson, Ashtabula County,” Mrs. J. A. Howells, in vol. 1 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 45-49 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 46. For comparisons sake, up until 1799, when trade in the region was still flourished among French, Canadian, British, and American merchants, tea could be had for about two dollars a pound. In 1813, General Orders issued by Fort Meigs stated that tea should be bought for three dollars a pound. Coffee, meanwhile, had gone from thirty eight cents to sixty two. Sheldon, The Early History of Michigan, 369-370; “General Orders, Head Quarters, Camp Meigs,” 21 April 1813, in Daniel Cushing, “Orderly Book of Cushing’s Company, 2nd U.S. Artillery April, 1813 – February, 1814,” 11-12.
raked from the ruins.” Using these makeshift means, she provided sustenance for the neighbors who came to help her rebuild.\textsuperscript{113}

Friendly Enemies: Relationships with the Natives

Rhetoric passing off the Native populace as universally dangerous to nonnative women was complicated by the fact that the two groups were often neighbors, or even friends. Jean Jacques, in \textit{The Social Contract}, explained that war was “not a concern between man and man but between State and State, in which individuals are only enemies accidentally, not as men, or as citizens, but as soldiers; not as members of a country but as its defenders”\textsuperscript{114} So, hostilities held against a group at large may not have been extended to familiar individuals belonging to those groups. This is a concept which is a heavy focus of Taylor’s \textit{The Civil War of 1812}, as well as of Keating’s \textit{Rising Up From Indian Country}.

While the overarching rhetoric focused on demonizing groups as monolithic wholes, relationships between individuals often could not or did not conform to expectations. Even in wartime, personal interactions could not be rendered in black and white. In direct contrast to the male fears that relationships with the Natives could only be negative for any white women involved, some women on the frontiers of the Great Lakes remembered their interactions with the Natives as friendly, and even desired.

Canadian or British Loyalist families in the Detroit region protected themselves against being plundered by Natives by painting “a red mark on their sheep and cattle, and red doors to their dwellings [which] insured the respect of their Indian allies.” Mrs. Mary McCarty’s husband refused to appropriate this practice, even to help insure the family’s wellbeing, declaring, “No


British red about me, if I die for it!” A Native friend of the McCarty’s, Ocomo, visited during the
British occupation, reassuring McCarty and her sister that they would be safe nevertheless
because they were of French descent, with dark eyes and hair, and could pass as Métis.115 Mrs.
Nathaniel Burdne was also visited by a Native man who worried for her safety because she had
been kind to him. He warned her and her husband that they might be in danger from his tribe if
they remained in the area, and the Burdnes hid their valuables and sought refuge in
Pennsylvania.116

Hanna Lane Rutan expressed sorrow that the Natives who had lived “midway between
Warren and the Rutan cabin” moved during the war and never came back because they had been
friends.117 Mrs. Jonathan Fowler had found a steady stream of babysitters for her daughter
Rachel in her own Native neighbors; in fact, Fowler sometimes tired of just how often Rachel
was gone from the home.118 Eliza Smith reported a similar experience, although the locals who
took her son, Havilah, left one of their own children in his place so that neither mother was
childless for the day.119

Elizabeth Quigly White was given a death sentence by her doctor after she developed a
severe case of pneumonia one winter. A short time after her diagnosis was delivered, “the

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115 In E.M. Sheldon, The Early History of Michigan, From the First Settlement to 1815 (New York: A.S.
Barnes & Company, 1856), 405-406
116 Once they finally feel safe to return to their abandoned home in Berlin, Ohio, the Burdnes were
informed that their Native savior had been tortured several times in attempts to discover their whereabouts. This
account seems somewhat suspect, as there is no obvious reason why the deaths of this couple would be so highly
sought after, but, nevertheless, the fact is that the Burdnes were willing to believe it, which suggests that they were
firm in their belief that this individual was a solid friend who cared deeply for their safety. “Berlin, Erie County,”
ed. Mrs. Gersham M. Barber, in vol. 3 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van
Rensselaer Wickham, 581-586 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 582.
117 “Champion, Trumbull County,” ed. Hannah R. Crawford, in vol. 2 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women
of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 227-232 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial
Commission, 1896), 227.
118 “Poland, Mahoning County,” in vol. 2 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed.
Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 260-264 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 261.
119 “Vernon, Trumbull County,” ed. Myra K. Pelton, in vol. 2 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the
Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 242-251 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial
Commission, 1896), 243.
Indians who frequently dropped in to see the Whites,” visited. One of them “dug some roots in the woods, made a decoction for her to drink at regular intervals and it did cure her.” Similarly, Mrs. Jane Burnett “receiv[ed] immediate and permanent relief” from a persistent toothache after she sucked on a root picked for her by a Native man.¹²⁰

Sabrina White recalled often trading food with her Native neighbors. On one occasion, she was pressured into giving away an entire batch of fried doughnuts by a man who returned the following week “with fresh venison and skins worth many times more than the cakes.”¹²¹ In White’s experience, this was normal behavior. The Natives with whom she interacted always paid her well and remained friendly. Mrs. Cynthia Spicer, who lived in Summit County, would have agreed with White’s sentiments. Spicer boarded a Native man overnight in her home and he returned several months later to bring her two freshly killed deer.¹²²

The above occurrences, however, should by no means suggest that these women were completely void of their husbands’ prejudices.¹²³ When reflecting upon her experiences with the Natives during the years of the war, Betsy Collins recounted an instance when a Native woman came to her Huron, Ohio home hoping to trade a basket full of whortleberries for some flour. Collins sent her daughter off to fetch the flour and she “returned with a dish full, whereupon her mother reproved her, telling her to empty half of the flour into the squaw’s sack. The girl obeyed,

¹²¹ The Pioneer Families of Cleveland, 1796-1840, Volume One, ed. Wickham, 74.
¹²² “Akron and Portage, Summit County,” ed. Dorena R. Marvin, in vol. 5 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 871-873 (Cleveland: The Executive Committee of the Women’s Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1924), 872.
¹²³ And, gentle though their words may be, the absence of personal information stands out starkly in these accounts. Almost none of them include individual names, or even tribal identification, despite claims of friendship. The fact that Ocomo was named stands out because of its rarity in light of the research done to prepare this thesis.
when Madam Squaw, with a roguish leer, emptied half the berries into the ladies’ dish.”

Hannah Jennings also felt taken advantage of when her trading partners refused to value a stunted ear of corn the same as a full sized ear.

Despite both Collins and Jennings being the ones trying to gain advantage, they still attempted to paint their Native counterparts as the ones in the wrong. Interestingly, though, even when they felt cheated, they do not express fear of the Natives, or exhibit a reluctance to deal with them. Mrs. Peck of Florence, Ohio once chased down a Native women who had run off with a freshly baked Johnny Cake and the string of fish she had proposed to trade for it, felt she could “give her a good shaking and ma[k]e her lay them both down.” Peck actually does seem to have been wronged, but here too there seems to have been no intense fear of harm from the Natives, suggesting that daily reality was more complex than pervasive fears.

As Mayer said, being “civilian and being at home did not protect women from attack.”

Towns without men might still be targeted, despite formal beliefs about the degree of safety and neutrality owed to civilians. Frontier towns and cities alike received visits from panicked, would-be Paul Reveres spreading warnings designed to terrify the remnant populace into some form of action: “Turn out! Turn out, and save yourselves!” “The Indians are upon us!” “The Indians are coming!”

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had to be capable of evaluating their own safety and deciding what measures to take to ensure it. So, in addition to taking up men’s work and maintaining their own labors, women had to be prepared to hide, run, or defend as they saw fit, coming up with tactics to protect their belongings, their families, and themselves if those fears of aggression did come to pass.

In Huntsburg, Ohio, the townswomen “carefully covered the fires at night, that no light might be visible, and crouched in the chimney corner, not daring to go to sleep for fear of being surprised by the Indians or the British” during the quiet of the night. In Tallmadge, Ohio, Lucy Wright turned her log home into a makeshift fortress while her husband Alpha was away with the military. She opened her doors to Tallmadge’s women and children, who made their way to the Wright’s for shelter during nights when an attack was feared. The women of Claridon, Ohio, kept wagon teams in permanent readiness, so they could flee at any sign of danger.

Greenfield, Ohio resident Mrs. Smith knew she would not have time to pack her cherished plateware if she had to rapidly leave town, so she made provisions to safeguard what she had to leave behind. She placed the dishes down a well, hoping to prevent them from being plundered after had she fled. Of a similar mind, the women of Claridon, Ohio preemptively buried under log heaps “everything that could not be packed up at a moment’s notice,” never sure when they might be forced out of town. Mrs. Rosanna Watrous remembered that her

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the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 604-616 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1897), 608.

129 The men of Huntsburg had been called up to their regiment following William Hull’s surrender. “Huntsburg, Geauga County,” ed. Mrs. Lucretia Pomeroy King in vol. 3 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 505-512 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 506.

130 Wright was pregnant with her first child during this time, and she gave birth while her husband was still in service. Oddly enough, many of the town’s residents believed that “hiding out over night in the surrounding forests” served to offer “greater safety.” “Tallmadge, Summitt County,” ed. Mrs. George M. Wright in vol. 1 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 123-129 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), 125.

131 This town had been left with only two grown men, one too old for service, and the other too infirm. “Claridon, Geauga County,” ed. Mary. J. Taylor, in vol. 5 of Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve, ed. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, 884-893 (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1924), 884.
family’s valuables were put into iron and brass kettles and buried for safekeeping. Mrs. Abiah McClelland placed her dishware into a brass kettle, used bran as an insulator, and then secreted the kettle under a hay stack. Unfortunately for McClelland, her hiding place made for an irresistible meal and she returned to find her best China had been destroyed by plundering cows seeking the hay and bran.\(^{132}\)

Mrs. Alex McKee had enough advance noticed before leaving Newark that she had time to pack up and send away fifteen trunks of belongings for safe keeping. She kept behind a large teatray, which she pulled along behind her “as a sleigh to protect her little daughter’s bare feet from the snow” as the pair make their leave.\(^{133}\) Mrs. Powell, another Newark resident, packed up her wine stores in sawdust so that it could leave town with her. Mrs. Sophia Pratt was in the middle of baking when the call came to clear Buffalo, so she simply “stuffed the dough into a pillowcase” and took it along to cook when she got to Willink, New York.\(^{134}\)

There were things more precious than possessions to protect as well. Susan Hampson, who was a teenager during the years of the war, was charged with caring for three of her younger siblings when the family had to flee for safety. She was laden down with supplies, and knew to run into the woods and wait at a prearranged tree. Her mother made the trip by an alternate route, with Hampson’s other siblings and additional supplies.\(^{135}\) The residents of Ridgeville fled to Captain Hoadley’s log home for refuge when they heard they were being invaded. There,


\(^{133}\) Eliza Campbell was the widow of Major Campbell, while Mrs. McKee’s husband was a prisoner of war being held at Niagara. Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 255.

\(^{134}\) Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 60; 267.

Ridgeville’s women pooled their supplies to create a small shared meal before they dressed the floor with a supply of blankets to create a comfortable space for their children to pass the night. In Ashtabula, six-year-old Julia Montgomery was settled behind a log to spend a night trading beads and secrets with a neighbor, while her mother waited in silent trepidation with the family Bible.

To protect her son, Mrs. Law marched out into the middle of a skirmish near Niagara and took thirteen year old John “away in her arms by force.” The boy had involved himself in the action between a Native scouting party and United States troops in an attempt to avenge his “dangerously wounded” father and his dead older brother, both of whom had fallen during the Battle of Fort George on 27 May 1813. According to Merritt, who recorded the event in his journal, the boy was enraged and would not have left the field of battle if his mother had not saved him.

Sophia Pratt fled Buffalo in a farm wagon with her three youngest children and two black servants, stopping to pick up five-year-old neighbor Mary Haddock, who had been separated from her family. She later passed two of her own children onto Augustus C. Fox, who had more free space on his pung than Pratt did in her wagon. Job Hoisington left her Buffalo home with her six children but twice pressed a passing rider into taking a child from her to get them

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139 Wilner, Niagara Frontier, 250-251.
140 One of these was daughter Esther, who would go on to marry Fox at the end of the war. History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers, Vol. II, ed. H. Perry Smith (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1884), 66. A pung is a sleigh with a squared off body. The term is a shortening of the Algonquin “tom-pung.”
away from the burning city faster.\textsuperscript{141} It took Hoisington weeks to bring her family back together, because her missing children had been taken into two neighboring counties, miles apart, and were only found after she took out an advertisement in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{142}

Not all women were so lucky. Mrs. Solomon Gillette was in the barn milking when Lewiston, New York was assaulted on 19 December 1813. Her three youngest children were still at home, which was being attacked when she reached it. Gillette had to watch as her son Jervis was shot and scalped before she was able to gather the remaining two children and travel two hundred seventy miles to the safety of her father’s Columbia County farm.\textsuperscript{143} An experience like Gillette’s would have been a most extreme violation of what should have been the sanctity of her gender and the protection she should have been owed as a woman and a civilian. Her home was invaded and she had to watch as her child was taken from her when a woman’s position as a virtuous mother was supposed to be her highest achievement.

Female Spies: Unassuming Covert Operatives

Yet the value placed on women as mothers and nurturers could be used to their advantage and gave them an unexpected way to participate in the war. According to Joan R. Gundersen,

\textsuperscript{141} Officially, the torch was set to Buffalo, “In the further prosecution of a contest to which so extraordinary a character had been given, His Excellency must be guided by the course of conduct which the Enemy shall hereafter persue [SIC], lamenting as His Excellency does, the necessity imposed upon him of retaliation upon the Subjects of America, the Miseries inflicted upon the Inhabitants of Newark, it is not his intention to persue [SIC] further a System of Warfare, so revolting to His own feelings, and so little congenial to the British Character, unless the future measures of the Enemy should compel him again to Resort to it.” Edward Baynes, “General Orders,” 22 February 1814, in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, vol. II}, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1923), 516.

The event was reported simply, delivering almost no measure of its true magnitude: “We have taken seven Pieces of Ordinance of different Calibres, destroyed four of the Enemy’s armed Schooners & Sloops – The Town of Buffalo has been burnt – as will that of Black Rock previous to its evacuation by the Troops – many of valuable Stores have been taken.” Gordon Drummond to George Prevost, 30 December 1813, in \textit{The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, vol. II}, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1923), 512.

\textsuperscript{142} One of the children was taken to Genesee County while the other “was left at a house many miles from Buffalo.” Though she did not know it at the time, Hoisington had been widowed that night. Wilner, \textit{Niagara Frontier}, 251. Also in Berton, \textit{Flames Across the Border}, 264.

\textsuperscript{143} Her oldest child, Miles, was also shot and scalped during the same attack, and “it is June before she learns that ten-year-old Orville is safe and Christmas before she knows that her husband is alive and a prisoner in Canada.” Berton, \textit{Flames Across the Border}, 260-261.
“Women’s roles as nurturers often blinded officials so they could not clearly see women as participants in the war.” While this presumption could have negative consequences, as when Procter dismissed information that Natives under his command had massacred injured prisoners after the Battle of Frenchtown as rumors stemming from “two exhausted, panic-stricken, female fugitives” whose “imagination was more vivid than their judgment was correct,” other women used their presumed powerlessness to their advantage.

On 27 April 1813, Elizabeth Selby, the daughter of the gravely ill Receiver General – Prideaux Selby – was ordered by Chief Justice Thomas Scott and Justice William Drummer Powell to hide the provincial treasury funds - amounting to over £3,000 that were kept on hand by her father. She locked the majority of it into an iron chest and stole away with part of it, and a collection of public documents, to the home of the Clerk of the House of Assembly, Donald McLean. Meanwhile, Mrs. Elizabeth Selby and Leah Allan, the wife of Major William Allan also worked to protect York’s valuables from the Americans. The two dressed Billy Roe, Prideaux Selby’s chief clerk, as “an old market woman, complete with sunbonnet and voluminous skirts” and sent him out of town with a horse-drawn wagon full of vegetables, which concealed a keg filled with gold.

Mrs. Gessean’s father and son were both taken as prisoners of war by the United States. Her father was readily ransomed, but her son was held prisoner at Lewiston, New York. Gessean took her father’s parole note and smuggled it in to her son when she was at Lewiston, selling

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144 Joan R. Gundersen, *To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 180. One can see this even in later reflections on the war. Laura Secord’s role in carrying information to FitzGibbon has been largely downplayed, the information “she carried to FitzGibbon [dismissed as] indefinite and of little real value at the moment, but was given the appearance of vital importance when Boerstler marched next day…. A woman, however, would not have weighed the difference in value between indefinite and definite information, and a display of plucky spirit is entitled to full respect, even though it had no actual effect on the fortunes of the day.” Wilner, *Niagara Frontier*, 225.
146 Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 42; 57.
butter to the garrison. Her action allowed her son to simply walk out of captivity and back across the border.147

Other men could take advantage of this too. John Le Couteur was ordered by General De Rottenburg to escort American prisoners Mrs. Birsh and Miss Rogers to Fort George under a flag of truce, and while there to gather all the information he could about the strengths of the men within. Le Couteur believed that men were far too willing to be accommodating when women were involved, and that men of the United States were far more gullible than the men of Great Britain in this regards.148

Alicia Cockburn, whose husband was Major Francis Cockburn, would have agreed with him. She wrote to a cousin that she was considering “a trip into the United States in a Flag of Truce, which to do the Yankees justice they treat with uncommon civility especially when born by Ladies, whom they allow to go much farther, and peep about much more, than we should do in a similar case, whatever might be their beauty & accomplishments.”149 Cockburn’s letter is important because it showed that women were aware that they were underestimated and could use it to their advantage.

And, as in the Revolutionary War, it was not abnormal to find women being used as spies or scouts, particularly because they might receive the benefit of the doubt in situations where a man would not. In the Niagara region, at Hainer’s Hill, William Merritt “sent an old woman over to reconnoiter, and ascertain their numbers. She was detained, but by an excellent stratagem she

got released. She told me their situation.” Unfortunately, Merritt gave no detail as to who this woman was or exactly what “excellent stratagem” she used to gain freedom from the enemy.  

James FitzGibbon seemed to be regularly aided by well informed females. On one occasion, he was approached by Mrs. James Kerby, the “wife of a local militia captain,” near Deffield’s Inn, on Portage Road – present day Main Street – in Lundy’s Lane. Kerby “warn[ed] him that Captain Chapin had just passed by with a hundred or more soldiers in addition to his own mounted riflemen.” FitzGibbon ignored Kerby’s advice to turn back, and was accosted by American soldiers at Deffield’s. Though unaided by other men present at the time, Kerby alternated between begging and threatening his attackers in an attempt to stop them, while Mrs. Deffield disarmed one of them, dropping her own child to do so, and ran off to hide his gun.

More famously, in June 1813, Laura Secord warned FitzGibbon about a surprise attack – the Battle of Beaver Dams - planned by the Americans. Secord traveled nearly twenty miles to deliver this information, despite inclement weather and difficult traveling conditions. She was accompanied part of the way by Elizabeth Secord, her sickly niece, who opted to join her at St. Davids, being of the opinion that it was not safe for her aunt to go alone.  

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150 McKenzie, Laura Secord, 71-72.  
151 Captain Cyrenius Chapin, a doctor when at home in Buffalo, led a band of marauders throughout the Niagara area during the war, ostensibly to protect the area’s inhabitants, many of whom, he believed, were secretly loyal to the United States. Chapin and his wife had settled in the region in 1803, and he had spent two years living in a house in Fort Erie, which was on the Canadian side of the border, because of the lack of housing on the American side, and he had an international practice. Though his actions were reported upon negatively by the British and Canadians, there is a chance that he might have been acting on knowledge he had gained living and working among Canadians. Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society: Volume V, ed. Frank H. Severance, 210-211.  
152 Though he is later willing to write letters to her credit several times over the middle of the 19th century, at the time FitzGibbon contented himself with, “at De Coris this Morning about 7 OClock I received information that about 1,000 of the Enemy with 2 Guns were advancing towards me from St. Davids,” which does not mention Secord’s involvement. James FitzGibbon to Major Peter W. de Haren, 24 June 1813, in The Publications of the Champlain Society: Select British Documents of the Canadian War of 1812, vol. II, ed. William Wood (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1923), 159. He did, however, declare that “not a shot was fired on our side by any but the Indians. They beat the American detachment into a state of terror, and the only share I claim is taking advantage of a favorable moment to offer them protection from the tomahawk and the scalping knife. Hitsman, The Incredible War of 1812, 154-155.
William Henry Harrison used an unnamed female informant who he described as “a ‘guardian angel’ [who] detailed the British positions of the previous day.” Thanks to this woman, Harrison’s men learned the position of a British ambush force hoping to flank the American troops as they followed Procter’s retreat up the Thames. In the Niagara area, Catherine Pool delivered both supplies and intelligence about enemy movement to Canadian militiamen stationed in her neighborhood. And Sarah Willott wrote to Major Sheaffe to inform him that an American invasion of Fort Erie was forthcoming and that the Pennsylvanian regulars planning the attack were running low on provisions, and so might be in a weakened state. So, because they were both underestimated and pitied, women had an ability to act in a manner that men would not have dared.

Women Who Were “Masculine:” Active Amazons, Androgynous Warriors, and War Leaders

The belief that women were natural nurturers also made them seem as unlikely candidates for acts of physical violence, though they were fully capable of these as well. When American prisoners of war were brought into Fort Amherstburg, Procter wrote that “the people of Canada could only regard them as a band of banditti who, without cause or provocation, had invaded their territory, murdered their husbands and children, and when they had it in their power, plundered their property.” Procter reported that the women of Amherstburg had to be physically “restrained by the magistrates and officers” to protect the prisoners from being assaulted.

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153 Antal, A Wampum Denied, 326.
154 Graves, In the Midst of Alarms, 337.
155 Graves, In the Midst of Alarms, 330.
156 Morgan, Public Men and Virtuous Women, 42; Morgan, “Gender, Loyalty and Virtue in a Colonial Context,” in Gender, War, and Politics, 315
157 Quoted in Antal, A Wampum Denied, 175.
In Florence, Ohio, ammunition stores were low, so the town’s women took it upon themselves to prepare a collection of “domestic weapons” to aid in Florence’s defense in case the town was attacked at night. Each evening, they removed the logs making up the floors in front of their doors, creating a pitfall which would quite literally trip up anyone entering their homes unawares, and they kept their fires stoked up all night to ensure that there would always be boiling water at hand to use as a weapon. They embraced the “masculine” positions they found themselves thrust into, though necessitated by the absence of males in their locality, and were ready to fight by their own merits.

On 11 August 1812, the women of Conneaut, Ohio were falsely informed that a British landing force was making for their harbor. A group from East Conneaut moved inland for cover in the forest. They silenced their children – employing “that soothing attention mothers know how to bestow” - to prevent their discovery, but could not do the same with a dog that had followed after them. They feared that the animal’s “continual unmitigated yelping” would disclose their position, so “it was unanimously resolved that that particular dog should die, and he was therefore sentenced to be hanged without benefit of clergy.” The women constructed a makeshift gallows and the dog was permanently silenced.

In September of 1812, Surgeon Usher Parsons, while examining the seamen who were supposed to staff the American fleet on the Great Lakes, “discovered among the crew a female clad in sailor’s apparel.” Patrick McDonogh, in a letter to his parents, wrote of a similar instance earlier in the year, where “Capt. C. has been struck off the rolls; his girl followed him to

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160 Graves, In the Midst of Alarms, 328.
Carlyle and acted as his waiter in men’s clothes.”161 Meanwhile, “the Oneida warriors, according to their custom, brought their women with them, and some of them took muskets and fought beside their men” openly, without needing to hide their gender.162

According to Lossing, “In this conflict [the Fort Dearborn Massacre] women bore a conspicuous part. All fought gallantly so long as strength permitted them.”163 And Berton said that when attacked, the women of Fort Dearborn “armed with their husbands’ swords, fight as fiercely as the men.”164 At least two of them, Mrs. Suzanne Corbin, the wife of Private Fielding Corbin and Cicely, a slave of the Healds, died fighting to protect the children in the supply wagons.165 A third, Mrs. Sergeant Isaac Holt, took up her slain husband’s sword, and “behaved as bravely as an Amazon.”166 At least two members of Heald’s command - Sergeant Thomas Burns of the Militia and Captain Robert Gilchrist - were killed by Native women. Gilchrist had already been taken prisoner and “was sitting in the boat to be taken across to Malden when the sqaw [SIC] came up behind him and struck him with a tommyhawk [SIC] to revenge the death of a son” she had lost in a battle against the United Sates.167 William McKay, the Deputy Superintendent of the British Indian Department, reported on 29 July 1814 that American keelboats under the command of Major John Campbell had been attacked by a group of Native

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161 When his superiors discovered the situation, this Captain C. was arrested, then dismissed from service. McDonogh makes no mention of what happened to “his girl.” Patrick McDonogh to Parents, 25 April 1812 in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society: Volume V*, ed. Frank H. Severance, 83.

162 At the defense of Black Rock, on 11 July 1813, which was also the first time that the Natives took part in the fighting on the American side. Wilner, *Niagara Frontier*, 229-230.


165 Berton, *The American Invasion of Canada*, 193. Rebekah Heald’s father, Samuel Wells, had slaves on his Kentucky farm, so Cicely “might have accomplished Rebekah Wells from Kentucky in 1809 or been given as a wedding gift by her father of her uncle.” She was the mother of an infant son. Keating, *Rising Up From Indian Country*, 89-90.


women, who “jumped on board with hoes and some breaking heads, others breaking casks, some trying to cut holes in her bottom to sink her, and other’s setting fire to her decks,” at the Rock Island rapids, south of Prairie du Chien, in Illinois Territory.168

And at Fort Niagara, Betsy Doyle reported in for duty after her husband, Canadian born Private Andrew Doyle, was captured at Queenstown Heights and imprisoned at Fort George until he could be taken away to be tried as a trader since “the British insisted that every ‘natural-born subject’ remained so for life.”169 Doyle carried hot shot to the cannon mounted on the Fort George’s southwest corner during fighting on 21 November 1812. Niagara’s commander, Lieutenant-Colonel George McFeely, mentioned the occasion in a report to General Alexander Smyth: “An instance of extraordinary bravery in a female (the wife of one Doyle, a private of the United States’ artillery, made a prisoner at Queenstown) I cannot pass over. During the most tremendous cannonading I have ever seen, she attended the six pounder on the old mess house with red hot shot, and showed fortitude equal to the maid of Orleans.”170 Before she learned of her husband’s imprisonment, Doyle had first gone to Queenstown to scour the battlefield for him

168 Quoted in Robert S. Allen, “His Majesty’s Indian Allies: Native Peoples, the British Crown and the War of 1812,” Michigan Historical Review 14, no. 2 (Fall 1988), 16.
169 Taylor, The Civil War of 1812, 4; Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, Heroines & History: Representations of Madeleine de Vercheres and Laura Secord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 10-13. Doyle has been identified as “Fanny,” including on a monument outside of Fort Niagara, since 1845, when Oliver G. Steele published a book which wrongly referred to Betsy Doyle as “Fanny” and Andrew Doyle as “Tom.” As such, she is commonly identified as Fanny Doyle, including in Sara Sabrina Swain’s 1928 The Story of Laura Secord and Fanny Doyle: The Heroines of the Niagara Frontier. After Fort Niagara fell to British forces in December 1813, Doyle and her four children made the 310 mile long trip to the Greenbush Cantonment, an army camp, when she worked as a nurse for the remainder of the war and the remainder of her life – she died of illness in 1819. Thomas Prohaska, “A War of 1812 Mystery Has Been Solved,” Buffalo News, 20 November 2011.
170 George M’Feeley to General Alexander Smyth, 25 November 1812, in Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States, During the War with Great Britain in the Years 1812, 13, 14, & 15 With Some Additional Letters and Documents Elucidating the History of that Period, ed. John Brannan (Washington City: Way & Gideon, 1823), 95; For McFeely, this incident made enough of an impression that he also wrote about it in his journal: “The extraordinary bravery of a female drew the attention of all our garrison: her name was Betsy Doyle, her husband was taken prisoner at Queenston in the fall under Genl. Van Renssaler. The woman attended and served one of the guns with hot shot during the day of the cannonading. She would take the ball tongs from any of the men, run to the fire, take up a hot shot, put it in the cannon, and run for another; thus she continued for the whole of the day.” in John C. Fredriksen, “Chronicle of Valor: The Journal of A Pennsylvania Officer in the War of 1812,” The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, 67, no. 3 (July 1984), 252.
or his remains and then to Fort George to try to ransom him. Doyle remained in service to the military for the rest of the War of 1812 and for the remainder of her life.

Conclusion

Extensive evidence shows that the Women of the Great Lakes region were active, useful participants during the War of 1812. They provided traditional domestic support on the road, and supplied food, clothing, shelter, and medical aid from their homes. However, they also successfully performed work that was supposed to be the purview of men. Women maintained businesses, managed crops, conducted peaceful relations with their neighbors, and, additionally, served as spies and took up weapons to fight when necessary. Despite this, their wartime actions were not given the same regard as those of men because they largely occurred because women had stepped out of – or had been forced out of – the gender roles which made white society comfortable.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

As Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan said, during this time period, the “contribution [of white women] to the tasks of national defense was rendered both natural and conspicuous. Their gender was mapped out in particular ways” in order to ensure that their “femininity was always placed in the foreground.”¹ Because, being female, even their wartime activities were vulnerable “to denigrations of their actions based on their sex. Ultimately, heroines face the trials of history- and of historians’ judgments in ways that heroes do not.”² So, during the war itself and “in its aftermath, women’s contributions to the defense of [their homes] were either downplayed or ignored, in favour of [playing up] the image of the helpless… wife and mother who entrusted her own and her children’s safety to the gallant militia and… troops.”³ Downplaying the capabilities of women helped to boost the valiance of men, and worked to reinforce the gender roles that had been established at the end of the colonial period in North America.

Following the War of 1812, the few female participants actually acknowledged and remembered for their contributions were those who acted in ways which could be documented as being either an extraordinary display of femininity or an incredible show of masculinity. The former could be depicted as a woman doing the greatest work she was able to while staying within her separate sphere, as women should, while the latter could be downplayed as an act of final desperation, an action to be admired in context but not to be duplicated. This was despite the fact that many women successfully took up performing more commonplace masculine tasks during times when crisis drew away an area’s able-bodied adult males.

¹ Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, Heroines & History: Representations of Madeleine de Vercheres and Laura Secord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 9.
² Ibid., 274.
³ Ibid., 120-121.
Joan Nicks and Jeannette Sloniowski suggest that a close examination of the Laura Secord story might offer a good understanding of this insistence on heroic femininity because the “longevity of the Secord image and its fluctuating popularity shows how symbols reflect cultural alterations within and between changing historical communities. Since cultural symbols are adorned with a community’s values, systems of meaning and significant, changes to the latter ultimately affect the symbolic meaning of the former.” So, Laura Secord, mother and nursemaid to a husband wounded defending their country, gained a historic legacy. Likewise, Dolley Madison, functioning as a figurehead mother of the United States, deciding to steadfastly remain in her home for as long as she was able also earned a “mythic status as America’s great heroine of the War of 1812,” and a lasting historic renown.

The War of 1812 was expected to be fought and won through extreme masculinity, and thus women were largely removed from its legacy. As Morgan explains, during the War of 1812, male military and militia activities were treated as natural actions, done to defend life, liberty, and property, which included helpless women and children. However, she argues that this representation of “manly courage exercised in the protection of feminine virtue may have had only a tenuous relationship to the lived experience of many colonists during the war.” Ultimately, women were supposed to be restricted to expected female roles, permitted to offer maternal support or, overwhelmingly, dismissed as hapless victims, though they actually undertook actions which should have readily suggested that they were capable of a more multifaceted participation in the process of war.

7 Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham observed a similar phenomenon when she attempted to chronicle women’s involvement in the settlement of the Western Reserve: “One thing noticed however, was the prominence
Further Conclusion: How Little Things Change

This attitude carried forward into future conflicts. Whites and Long reported that, during the Civil War, women’s “enhanced workloads and responsibilities were a given, in the absence of so many men.”8 Yet Faust, in her examination of the Civil War, quoted George Fitzhugh, a regional apologist and proslavery advocate, who said in 1854 that “woman… has but one right and that is the right to protection. The right to protection involves the obligation to obey. A husband, lord and master… nature designed for every women.”9 In 1861, young women found themselves at a loss of how to contribute to the war. Alice Ready admitted to her diary that, “I never before wished I was a man-now I feel so keenly my weakness and dependence…. How I should love to fight and even die for my country…. [W]hat a privilege I should esteem it, but am denied because I am a woman.” Kate Stone, meanwhile, confessed to hers that “I hate weary days of inaction. Yet what can women do but wait and suffer?”10 Even hospitals became “a battleground of class and gender, exacerbated by the new legislation appointing and empowering women,” despite women having had an official place in the military hospitals during the War of 1812.11 So, while women had made important contributions to the War of 1812 just five decades earlier, their actions were still considered aberrations from the normality of white gender roles, and this would be the case in conflicts to come.

give to biographies of men, living or dead, who had been identified with the settlement and growth of the Reserve, with little or no mention of their wives, who, doubtless, had performed an equal though different part in laying the foundations of future civilization and prosperity.” Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, “Introduction,” in vol. 1 of *Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Centennial Commission, 1896), v.


9 Quoted in Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 6

10 Ibid., 20, 21.

11 In September 1862, the Confederate Congress put in place legislation which specifically created positions for women in military hospitals after studies showed that mortality rates decreased from 10% under male nurses to only 5% under female nurses. Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 100, 97.
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