



▲ Home

◀ Contents



Recording the War of 1812: Stan Rogers' (Un)sung Heroes

by Nick Baxter-Moore

This article examines the role of popular music in the making and dissemination of "popular" history and the differences between "popular" or "vernacular" memories and the official versions of history handed down to us by elites. The principal focus is on three songs by the late Canadian singer-songwriter Stan Rogers about the War of 1812-14, the war between Britain and the United States over the future of the surviving British North American colonies which was also, in some measure, Canada's own "War of Independence." Each of these songs celebrates a contribution to the British/Canadian cause by an individual who has been largely overlooked in official/academic histories of the War—hence the reference to "(un)sung heroes" in the title.

The songs will be discussed qua songs, within the context of Stan Rogers' songwriting and recording career; for example, the extent to which each song is typical of Rogers' work in terms of both matter and manner, subject and music. But the songs are also analyzed as forms of "popular" or "vernacular" history—as differentiated from the "official" version of Canadian history which is promulgated by the monuments, markers and plaques erected by government agencies such as parks departments and historic sites boards and by the written versions of Canada's past produced by academic and other professional historians (on some of the differences, see Thompson 1997, 55-62). Echoing many other scholars in the tradition of critical historical studies, Brian Osborne observes that "the past is not preserved but is socially constructed through archives, museums, school curricula, monuments and public displays" (Osborne 2001, 9). Such institutional representations of the past embody the official construction of collective memory advanced by elites—with their own agendas of social cohesion, nation-building, stability and continuity—in contrast to what might be labeled popular or vernacular (folk) memory (see Osborne 2001, 9; also Bodnar 1994, 75; Gillis 1994, 3-6). Rogers' songs examined here both draw upon and serve to disseminate popular/vernacular memories, myths and legends of the War of 1812.

For those unfamiliar with the name of Stan Rogers, he was a significant Canadian singer-songwriter, the "Canadian" in this statement referring both to his citizenship and, more importantly, to the fact that many of his finest songs are distinctively associated with this place, detailing events of Canada's history or documenting the lives of its people. Rogers was born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1949 and, having played in a number of high school bands and twice dropped out of

university, became a professional musician in his early twenties. After a couple of notably unsuccessful singles and an eponymous album recorded for RCA in the early 1970s, he first came to national prominence as a recording artist with the release of his first independently produced album, *Fogarty's Cove*, a "regional song-cycle" celebrating the people and cultures of Atlantic Canada, in 1977. Before his death in an airplane fire in June 1983, he recorded another five albums, including two more "regional concept" albums about the prairies of the Canadian west (*Northwest Passage*, 1981) and the Great Lakes region of Ontario (*From Fresh Water*, 1984). His most famous songs include "Make and Break Harbour," "Barrett's Privateers," "The Mary Ellen Carter," "The Field Behind the Plow," "Northwest Passage"; these and many others, over twenty years after his death, continue to be performed and recorded by artists in Canada and abroad.

The songs discussed in this article, "Billy Green," "The Nancy" and "MacDonnell on the Heights," are drawn from both ends of Rogers' career. While there are expected stylistic differences among them, bearing witness in part to Rogers' maturation as a songwriter, there are also a number of interesting parallels with respect to the songwriting process (including the amount of background research Rogers undertook before writing the songs) and in the apparent motivation behind their composition.

Billy Green, The Scout

In late May 1813, having captured Fort George and Fort Erie, American forces under the command of Brigadier-General John Chandler advanced westward across the Niagara Peninsula towards York, the capital of Upper Canada. The British forces in turn retreated to Burlington Heights, at the western end of Lake Ontario. On the night of June 5, the US troops set up scattered encampments around the Gage homestead in Stoney Creek, a pioneer settlement which is now part of metropolitan Hamilton, Ontario. Under cover of darkness, 700 British regulars and militia under Colonel (later General) John Harvey attacked and routed the American army of some 3000 men, capturing two American generals and sending the US forces in quick retreat back to the Niagara River. Stoney Creek was thus a pivotal battle of the War. In the words inscribed on one of the plaques at the base of the monument marking the battle site:

THIS IS HELD TO HAVE BEEN THE DECISIVE ENGAGEMENT
OF THE WAR
HERE THE TIDE OF INVASION WAS MET AND TURNED BY THE
PIONEER PATRIOTS AND SOLDIERS OF THE KING.

While this official plaque, erected by the Government of Canada, lists many of the principal officers and regiments participating in the battle, it

makes no mention of a Canadian pioneer youth by the name of Billy Green, who is the principal protagonist in Stan Rogers' song about the Battle of Stoney Creek. The first verse of "Billy Green" establishes the singer's purpose:

Attend all you good countrymen, my name is Billy Green,
And I will tell of things I did when I was just nineteen.
I helped defeat the Yank invader, there can be no doubt,
Yet lately men forget the name of Billy Green, the Scout.

The song "Billy Green" takes the form of a traditional storytelling folk ballad, encompassing ten four-line verses (without chorus or refrain) sung by Rogers' solo baritone voice to a simple accompaniment of two acoustic guitars played by Rogers and "Curly Boy Stubbs" (alias his producer and long-time friend, Paul Mills). Successive verses detail the story of Billy and his brother Levi spying on the American forces as they advanced west across Niagara, at one point scaring some American soldiers by whooping "like Indians," how his "brother" (in fact, brother-in-law) Isaac [Corman] was captured by the enemy, Billy's ride to the British camp on Burlington Heights and his role in guiding Colonel Harvey and the British/Canadian forces through the night to attack the American encampment and defeat the invaders. (Interestingly, Rogers' version of the story makes no mention of another part of the popular folk-tale—that Billy took with him to the British encampment the Americans' password which Isaac Corman had learned while briefly detained by the foe—see Crump 2003, 46). In the tenth and final verse, Rogers reintroduces the rationale for the song:

And so it was I played the man though I was but nineteen.
I led our forces through the night that this land would be free.
I foiled the Yank invaders and I helped put them to rout,
So, let no man forget the name of Billy Green, the Scout.

"Billy Green" was originally written for and performed on the CBC Radio folk show, *Touch the Earth*, in 1975 (a remastered version of recording was released on the retrospective album *From Coffee House to Concert Hall* in 1999—see *Discography*). It therefore comes from relatively early in Rogers' song-writing career and before his first album (*Fogarty's Cove*) established him as the leader of a "Can-trad" folk revival and a spokesperson for the fishermen and sailors, farmers and laid-off plant workers, the fast-disappearing independent commodity producers and artisans of Atlantic Canada. But even at this early stage, there is evidence in this song of the documentary and archival impulses that characterize much of Rogers' later work.

Salvaging is a recurring subject matter, metaphor and method in Rogers' songwriting (see Baxter-Moore 1995b). For example, "Man With Blue Dolphin" (from the album, *From Fresh Water*) describes the efforts of a "wonderful, crazy man in Windsor" (A. Rogers 1984) to raise the sister-ship of the more famous *Bluenose* from the bottom of the harbour. In "The Wreck of the Athens Queen" (from *Fogarty's Cove*),

"salvagers," a euphemism for "looters," take all they can—cases of Napoleon Brandy, a couch of green, ... even a live cow—before the ocean claims a ship wrecked on Ripper's Rock. And, in one of Rogers' most famous songs, "The Mary Ellen Carter" (from *Between The Breaks ... Live!*), the efforts of the crew to recover their sunken vessel, in the face of physical hardship and the indifference of her owners, are made in the song an inspirational example for all those "to whom adversity has dealt a mortal blow" as they seek to reclaim their lives. At the same time, of course, the crew's motivation ("that her name not be lost to the knowledge of men") becomes an explicit statement of Rogers' own method of reclaiming for Canadians neglected episodes and characters from their history, such as Billy Green's role in the Battle of Stoney Creek and, later, the contributions of other unsung heroes of the War of 1812.

It must be acknowledged that Billy Green has not been entirely forgotten, although he plays a more central role in local tradition and the popular history of Stoney Creek and the Hamilton area than in official or academic histories of the War. He is the subject of a children's book, **The Scout Who Led an Army** (Ballantyne 1963) and, six years after Rogers wrote his song, the late Canadian popular historian Pierre Berton made Green the central figure of his account of the Battle of Stoney Creek in his two-volume history of the War of 1812 (Berton 1981, 72-79). At the annual re-enactment of the battle each June, one of Green's descendants relates his ancestor's story to visitors assembled in an upper room of the Battlefield House Museum. In the gift shop downstairs, one may purchase a video, *The Legend of Billy Green and the Battle of Stoney Creek* (Soyka 1999)—note the use of the word "legend"—as well as a pamphlet produced by the local historical society in which author James Elliott introduces his reconstruction of the story with the words "Despite official determination to ignore it, the saga of Scout Green has proved an enduring tale" (Elliott 1994, Preface).

In contrast to the popular or vernacular/folk history surrounding the Battle of Stoney Creek, "a local scout, Billy Green" receives one brief mention in George Stanley's influential history of the land campaigns of the War (Stanley 1983, 187). As noted in the introduction to this discussion, such scant attention is also his fate in the official plaques and markers around the battlefield. But his name can be found by those willing to search for it, although the symbolism of official history relegates him to a subordinate role in the proceedings.

In Battlefield Park, at the corner of King Street and Highway 20 in the modern City of Stoney Creek, stand the Battlefield House Museum (the old Gage family homestead which was occupied by the Americans before the battle) and the Stoney Creek Monument, a hundred-foot tall octagonal tower commemorating the British/Canadian victory. Beside Battlefield House, a plaque erected by the Archaeological and Historic

Sites Board of Ontario celebrates the valour of "some 700 British regulars of the 8th and 49th Regiments under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Harvey" who prevailed over the 3000-strong American army and emphasizes the importance of the battle: "This victory is credited with preventing Upper Canada from being overrun in 1813." But there is no mention here of Billy Green, the local hero.

From Battlefield House, the visitor must climb half-a-dozen flights of stone steps to the base of the Monument, perched on a rise part-way up the Niagara escarpment, or "the Mountain," as it is called in the Hamilton area. Once there, numerous plaques may be seen around the entrance which record the regiments and their officers who participated in the battle, list the names of those regular British soldiers who died and, most prominently, detail the circumstances of the opening of the tower in 1913 (using the wonders of modern science, on the centenary of the battle, Queen Mary pushed a button in London to unveil the monument electronically). But, as I left the tower on my first field trip to Stoney Creek, on an icy February day, I thought to look up one more time. Squinting into wintry sunshine, I saw a stone shield, some forty feet up the monument, bearing the name "VINCENT" (for General John Vincent, who led the British attack from the rear and got lost in the woods following the battle, being discovered the next morning without sword and most of his uniform). Moving around the tower to the right, I read more names on shields similarly placed -- "PLENDERLEATH" (who commanded the 49th Regiment), "FITZGIBBON" (a lieutenant under Harvey who helped reconnoiter the American positions), "JAMES GAGE" (owner of the Gage farm which the Americans had occupied)—until the path fell away down the hill and further progress was blocked by a stand of honeysuckle vines. Circling back to the left past Vincent, I found "HARVEY" (Colonel, later General, who led the British and Canadian forces in the attack), "OGILVIE" (who commanded the 8th Regiment), "MERRITT" (Captain William Hamilton Merritt who led the local militiamen supporting the regulars) and, finally, at the back of the tower, accessible only if one braves the undergrowth, furthest from the front entrance and the steps which lead tourists up from the museum to the monument, facing away from the park and into the hillside beyond, one last shield bearing the simple transcription "SCOUT-GREEN."

Even on his gravestone, Billy Green plays "second fiddle" to a British officer. Green died in 1877 and was buried in Stoney Creek Cemetery, a few hundred metres west of Battlefield Park on the other side of Highway 20. Green's original gravestone disappeared and was replaced in 1938 by a new stone erected near the entrance to the cemetery, next to the obelisk dedicated to his brother Levi Green and family. But the "front" of this new four-sided marker, the side facing the road leading into the cemetery, bears the legend "In memory of General Harvey, British Gen. who had command at Battle of Stoney Creek June 6 1813." A second side of the stone is blank, while a third commemorates the role of Isaac Corman, Billy's brother-in-law. Finally,

the visitor comes to the fourth side, the back of the stone, the side furthest away from the entry road, where the following words appear:

In memory of Billy Green the Scout who led the British troop in a surprise night attack winning the decisive battle of Stoney Creek. Born Feb. 4, 1795, died March 15, 1877.

I don't know if Stan Rogers visited Battlefield Park or Stoney Creek Cemetery before writing his song but, according to his widow (see A. Rogers 1999), as part of his research he did interview Billy Green's great, great grand-daughter who still lived in the Hamilton/Stoney Creek area. It is also likely that he was shown, or was referred to, a first-person account of Green's exploits as told to his grandson, John Green, inasmuch as many of the details of Rogers' lyrics (except for the omission of the password episode) bear striking resemblance to that version. Green's statement was published in *The Hamilton Spectator* in March 1938 to mark the 90th birthday of John's widow, and it is reprinted in full in Mabel Thompson's article on Billy Green published in *Ontario History* (Thompson 1952). The *Spectator* article was probably responsible in part, at least by raising public awareness, for the erection of the new marker in the cemetery later the same year, for it laments that "one of the greatest heroes of Canadian history has passed on with his deeds hardly noticed. ... today this gallant lies in the cemetery at Stoney Creek but no special monument commemorates his historic deed" (Anon. 1938). Some fourteen years later, it would appear that Green's role was still largely neglected by official historians. Mabel Thompson, an "amateur" historian and member of the Women's Wentworth Historical Society, set out to "authenticate a tradition," by researching the facts behind the popular local retelling of Billy Green's story because, as Thompson argued, "this tale of romantic and inspiring heroism ... seemed to me to have been shamefully neglected" (Thompson 1952, 173).

Further evidence that Rogers must have read either the account in *The Spectator* or Thompson's article before writing his song is the status which, according to his widow (A. Rogers 1999), he conferred on Billy Green as "Canada's 'Paul Revere'," a parallel drawn by both earlier writers. "He was the Paul Revere of Canada" stated the *Spectator* columnist, while Thompson concluded her article with a rhetorical question: "It has been said that Canadians lack patriotic pride and that we fail to give honour and acclaim to our famous men and heroic leaders. In Billy Green the Scout, who has been called the Paul Revere of Canada, have we not a local hero worthy of belated recognition?" (Thompson 1952, 181). "Belated recognition" and "salvaging" are part of the same trope, the same metaphor, which is evident in the work of both popular historians and popular singer-songwriters such as Rogers.

To the extent that there is a disconnect between popular history

and the official versions of Canada's past, it is perhaps because the latter have for too long given honour to "famous men" (prime ministers and politicians, generals and other officers—before 1867, mostly British) and have, in the process, neglected the roles played by "ordinary" Canadians, such as Billy Green. Military history, in particular, has tended to be based on official correspondence and reports, mostly written by officers, many of them notably self-serving. For example, in his official report on the Battle of Stoney Creek, Lieutenant Colonel Harvey made no mention of the contribution of Billy Green; nor did he make any reference to the less-than-glorious role played in the battle by his superior officer, General John Vincent (see Berton, 1981, 79). Harvey's willingness to play by the rules was duly recognized. Near Burlington Heights, next to the tourist attraction of Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario, another plaque erected by the Ontario Archaeological and Historic Sites Board marks his role in leading a "surprise attack on an invading United States force ... [which] is generally credited with saving Upper Canada from being overrun by the enemy." The plaque also lists Harvey's rewards for service to the Empire: a knighthood in 1824, appointments as Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick (1834-41), Governor of Newfoundland (1841-46) and Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia (1846-51); he died in 1852, aged 74.

Interlude—From Fresh Water

About the time that he wrote "Billy Green," Stan Rogers was vacationing with his extended family in Nova Scotia when his Aunt June suggested that he start writing songs about Atlantic Canada (S. Rogers 1977). The result was *Fogarty's Cove* and Rogers became labeled as a "Maritime folkie," a role that he performed very successfully for a couple of years (and most of two more albums, *Turnaround*, 1978, and *Between The Breaks ... Live!*, 1979) before discovering while on tour in western Canada that he could also empathize with and write songs about prairie farmers and ranchers, oil field roughnecks and displaced Maritimers who had migrated west in search of work. It was not until near the end of his life, therefore, that Rogers started again to write about the province of his birth.

In 1981, following the release of his fourth album in less than five years, Rogers applied for and secured a Canada Council grant to allow him to spend less time on the road and more time both to spend with his family and to research and write a new regional song-cycle, for which the working title was "the Great Lakes Project." This project was intended, according to Rogers' widow: to 'fill in the gap' so to speak, between the continental extremes of *Fogarty's Cove* and *Northwest Passage ...* He had an immense amount of pleasure doing the research for the project. He discovered, much to his delight, an Ontario he had not known or suspected, more unsung heroes of Canadian history and enough information, useful and otherwise to enliven supper table

conversation wherever he was (A. Rogers 1984).

A number of songs from "the Great Lakes Project" were recorded in the months before Rogers died in June 1983; many of these appeared as tracks on his last studio album, *From Fresh Water*, released posthumously in 1984 (and some other, previously unreleased tracks appear on the later compilation, *From Coffee House to Concert Hall*). Musically, *From Fresh Water* is Rogers' most diverse and ambitious recording, mixing simple acoustic "folk-revival" arrangements for some songs with extensive use of modern technology on others—for example, the multiple, overlaid guitar tracks on "White Squall"—to mediate between performer and audience; and, for the first time, on this album Rogers and producer Paul Mills employed orchestral string accompaniments for a number of songs. But, while the music might make concession to the complexity and modernity of contemporary Ontario, in his choice of subject-matter, Rogers ignored almost entirely the industrialized, metropolitan, multicultural Golden Horseshoe. Instead he focused on life in small towns, fishing ports and Great Lakes harbours. His songs tell of sailors on the 'Lakers' ("White Squall"), freshwater fishermen ("Tiny Fish for Japan"), a lock-keeper on the Welland Canal/St Lawrence Seaway ("Lock-Keeper"), a small-town hockey star who didn't quite make it to the NHL ("Flying")—and two more "unsung heroes" of the War of 1812, Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell, provincial aide-de-camp to General Sir Isaac Brock, and Alexander Mackintosh, sailing master of *The Nancy*.

"MacDonnell on the Heights"

Some thirty miles, or fifty kilometers, east along the Niagara escarpment from Stoney Creek, site of the exploits of Billy Green, is another tower set in another park which commemorates another, earlier, battle of the War of 1812-14. In Queenston Heights Park, which marks the first major engagement of the War, the statue of General Sir Isaac Brock stands atop a 184-foot stone column, overlooking the Niagara River, the historic village of Queenston and, further north, Fort George, on the edge of the old town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, formerly Newark, the original capital of Upper Canada. Brock did not, of course, "win" the Battle of Queenston Heights; he was killed by an Ohio sharpshooter's musket ball early in the morning of October 13, 1812, as he led a frontal assault on American troops stationed on a redan (earthwork) halfway up the escarpment. It was Major General Sir Roger Sheaffe who led the British and Canadian forces to victory later that same afternoon. Today, at the foot of Brock's monument in the park, a plaque marks the death of one General and the victory of another:

THE BATTLE OF QUEENSTON HEIGHTS

In the early morning of 13 October 1812, American troops under

Major-General Stephen Van Rensselaer crossed the Niagara River and took possession of Queenston Heights. Major-General Isaac Brock hurried from Fort George to lead a small force against the invaders and was killed in an attempt to regain the Heights. In the afternoon, Major-General Roger Hale Sheaffe with his force of British regulars, militia and Indians from Fort George strengthened by reinforcements from Chippewa, took the hill from the west flank, capturing 958 prisoners. This celebrated victory ended the American offensive of 1812.

In the "official" version of the history of the Battle of Queenston Heights presented to tourists via this plaque and the many other markers erected around the park by agencies of the federal and provincial governments, there is no reference to the role of another officer who died in the battle and whose remains were subsequently interred alongside those of Brock in the mausoleum at the base of the monument. Stan Rogers' song, "MacDonnell on the Heights," seeks to set the record straight, commemorating the Battle of Queenston Heights by relating the story not of the too-obvious Brock, or the unsympathetic Sheaffe, but of the exploits of one Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell (or, in Rogers' version, "MacDonnell"):

To say the name, MacDonnell, it would bring no bugle call
But the Redcoats stayed beside you when they saw the
General fall.
T'was MacDonnell raised the banner then and set the
Heights aflame,
But not one in ten thousand knows your name.

In Rogers' song, MacDonnell's place in history, like that of Billy Green, has been overlooked. MacDonnell it was who rallied the British troops following Brock's death, leading a second charge up the escarpment against the American positions, before he too fell mortally wounded. Now (in the present of the song), he is buried beside Brock at the foot of the tower which crowns Queenston Heights and on which the General's statue stands, marking both the battle and his (Brock's) place in Canadian, and colonial, history. Had he survived, or had not the famous General fallen on the same day, Rogers' words suggest, MacDonnell might be celebrated as a Canadian hero ("... perhaps had you not fallen, you might be what Brock became"). But today, Rogers sings, his death is mostly unremarked ("... not one in ten thousand knows your name"), except for a lichen-covered weathered stone at the foot of Brock's column:

At Queenston now, the General on his tower stands alone
And there's lichen on 'MacDonnell' carved upon that
weathered stone
In a corner of the monument to glory you could claim
But not one in ten thousand knows your name.

(Ch) You brought the field all standing with your courage
and your luck
But unknown to most, you're lying there beside old General
Brock.
So you know what it is to scale the Heights and fall just short
of fame
And have not one in ten thousand know your name.

In several important respects "MacDonnell on the Heights" is not a typical Stan Rogers song. Musically, "MacDonnell ..." is one of those songs on *From Fresh Water* in which piano and string section complement the more usual line-up of guitars or mandolins, fiddle and/or flute, sometimes supplemented by a rhythm section of bass and drums. And, unlike other Rogers songs with historical themes, such as "Barrett's Privateers" or "Northwest Passage," there are no powerful, soaring harmonies. Even in the chorus, Rogers' voice here carries the melody alone, at stately tempo.

Nor was MacDonnell a typical Stan Rogers hero. With rare exceptions, Rogers' principal protagonists tended to be "everyday heroes," ordinary working Canadians struggling to make a living, to maintain family and community, and their dignity, amid the vicissitudes of political, economic and social forces over which they had little or no control (Baxter-Moore 1995a, 321-323). MacDonnell, by contrast, was an officer and a gentleman, a member of the colonial elite. As Ariel Rogers commented in her liner notes for the album (A. Rogers 1984), MacDonnell was one of those "good young men" from the "right" kind of family with the "right" kind of gentleman's education, a law practice and the ear of influential people. There's nothing to indicate he was not a decent sort, but somebody writing up the accounts didn't want any too much of the glory to be taken from the General!

John Macdonell was how he spelt his name, although, as with many Scottish clans, different branches of the family "spelt their surname any way they pleased" (Martin & Simpson 1989, 196; see also Dalmy et al. 1996). He was born in Greenfield in Glengarry in the west of Scotland in 1785. In 1792, he arrived in Upper Canada with his parents, settling in Glengarry township, in what is now Eastern Ontario. In the same year, his uncle, John McDonell became the first Speaker of the Legislature of Upper Canada. Young John became a law student in 1803 and was admitted to the Bar of Upper Canada in 1808 (Whitfield 1974, 38). His legal practice evidently flourished, and/or his family connections helped him along, because in 1811 Macdonell was appointed Acting Attorney General of Upper Canada; the following year he was elected Member of Parliament for Glengarry. As Attorney General, he worked closely with the Provisional Lieutenant-Governor of the province, General Brock, who made him his provincial aide-de-camp at the outbreak of war. Macdonell served under Brock in the campaign which saw General Hull's invasion of south-west Ontario

repelled, then returned with him to the Niagara border where, it was expected, the real invasion would occur.

On the morning of October 13, 1812, the sound of gunfire awoke Brock at Fort George. The General mounted up and rode south, along the way meeting a Lieutenant Jarvis riding north with the news that American troops had crossed the river from Lewiston and were attacking Queenston Heights. Instructing Jarvis to ride on to Fort George with orders to General Sheaffe to muster the reserves, Brock continued to the village of Queenston to organize defence of the village. Macdonell was also awoken and he galloped off after the General in such haste that he left his sword behind (Richardson 1902, 106). He also met up with Lieutenant Jarvis from whom he borrowed a sword; telling Jarvis where his own sabre could be found and to use it for the rest of the day, Macdonell rode on to Queenston, arriving around the time that Brock was killed leading the first frontal assault up the escarpment.

Brock had led the first assault on foot, having tethered his horse, Alfred, in the village of Queenston. Although his last words allegedly delivered the injunction "Surgite" ("press on") and/or warned that "My fall must not be noticed or impede my brave companions from advancing to victory" (cited in Stanley 1983, 127), when Brock fell, the attack foundered and most of the British soldiers retreated, carrying the General's body back down to Queenston (other authorities suggest that Brock's death was quick and silent—see "Appendix A: The Last Words of Isaac Brock," in Malcolmson 2003, 231-233). Macdonell, either from youthful impetuosity and military inexperience, or because he was trying to fool the Americans into believing that Brock still lived, mounted Alfred and rode at the head of some seventy men in a second attempt to recapture the battery on the redan. As bullets and shot rained down from the hill, Alfred was hit, reared and plunged and, as he tried to control the horse, Macdonell was shot in the back. Macdonell too was carried back to Queenston and further on to the Durham farm at Vrooman's Point, as the British troops retired once more to await Sheaffe and reinforcements from Fort George. Having suffered as many as four bullet wounds, Macdonell died the following day.

Although the liner notes for the song suggest that "The texts give a terribly sparse accounting of this man" (A. Rogers 1994), Macdonell does appear in most scholarly and military histories of the early days of the war, even though his exploits are naturally overshadowed by those of his superior officers, Brock and Sheaffe. We may also learn from these sources something of his character. By all accounts, Macdonell had a brilliant legal mind, but thereby may have developed a certain arrogance (Berton 1980, 241). He was reputedly quick-tempered—he was once involved in a pistol duel over one of his legal cases, although he subsequently declined to fire on his opponent (Whitfield 1974, 38). He was certainly impetuous, as his actions on the day of the battle

(such as forgetting his sword in his haste) might further attest, although that might be forgivable in a 27 year-old who had advanced so far in his career.

If, as Rogers sings, "not one in ten thousand knows your [Macdonell's] name," it is in the "official" version of history that Macdonell is neglected. A casual visitor to Queenston Heights Park would search for reference to him in vain. Official provincial and federal government markers, plaques and monuments in the park atop the escarpment celebrate Brock, Sheaffe, Laura Secord and the (anonymous) members of the "Coloured Corps," a unit of soldiers of African-American descent who served as part of Sheaffe's victorious army. Even the lichen-covered stone bearing the name "MacDonnell" is not where Rogers suggests it to be in the song —i.e., in a corner of Brock's monument. Rather, there is a plaque for Macdonell (or another variation on the spelling of his name) inside the base of the monument, which is open only in summer months, bearing the inscription: "In a vault beneath are deposited the mortal remains of Lieut. Col. John McDonnell P.A.D.C. and aide-de-camp to Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K.B., who fell mortally wounded in the Battle of Queenston on the 13th October, 1812, and died the following day."

Neglected though he may be in the official version of the War, Macdonell has his supporters. On one of my visits to the Queenston Heights monument, a young woman, a student summer employee working in the gift shop, apologized for the state of the brass plaques memorializing Macdonell and Brock because, she explained, they were currently out of brass polish. However, when polish was available, she stated with only a tiny hint of embarrassment, she always gave Macdonell's plaque a little extra attention because "what he did was so brave," and because "he died so young" and because "the history books ignore him." If this young woman were on duty year-round, Macdonell might not need Stan Rogers' song to celebrate his place in Canadian history. Instead, to discover a memorial to Macdonell in full public view at any time of year, a visitor to Queenston Heights has to follow the walking trail that links five marker stones erected by Parks Canada to commemorate various stages of the Battle, away from the tower, down off the escarpment to "the Redan Battery" located in the woods below the Heights. There, near the redan, is a cairn of four stones—one large, lichen-covered stone balanced on the three others, bearing an oval, now-green, copper plate embossed with the legend:

SITE OF
REDAN BATTERY
NEAR THIS SPOT
LIEUT-COL. JOHN MACDONELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF UPPER CANADA

WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED
13 OCTOBER 1812
ERECTED BY LUNDY'S LANE HIS-SOC - 1906

It is significant to our inquiries, and to Rogers' case, that the plaque commemorating the death of Macdonell, the Attorney General of Upper Canada, in one of the most important battles of the war, was erected not by some agency of the federal or provincial government, but by the local historical society.

Macdonell's role in the Battle is publicly recorded on one other monument. In the village of Queenston, below the Heights, near the cenotaph marking the fall of General Brock (placed by Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1860) and a stone recording the contribution of Indians of the Six Nations at Queenston Heights, stands a glass-encased bronze sculpture of Alfred, General Brock's horse, which was dedicated in 1976. On the stone base of the sculpture an inscription relates Alfred's story: that Brock rode him seven miles from Fort George, then left him tethered nearby while the General led the first assault up the escarpment on foot; that Macdonell then rode Alfred at the head of the second charge. The wording continues: "he [Macdonell] was mortally wounded and Alfred killed, part of the price of saving Canada on that fateful day." It is not entirely clear whether the death of Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonell or of Alfred the horse that should be considered the greater price and hence the greater reason for regret (although the continuation of the inscription below, "They also serve who only stand and wait," might suggest that Alfred, rather than Macdonell, is the principal subject of mourning). As with Billy Green, the symbolism of the provenance and the placing of the few official markers that recognize his role serve to relegate Macdonell to the margins of Canadian history.

"MacDonnell on the Heights" is therefore another of Rogers' salvage projects. Macdonell is a Canadian hero—certainly more "Canadian," at least by residence, than most of the other officers at the time—whose exploits have been neglected by official historians. However, Rogers' biographer, Chris Gudgeon, suggests another layer of meaning to the song. Noting that, in one of the manuscript drafts of the lyrics (I haven't seen this, so cannot confirm it), the last line of the chorus reads "Not one in ten thousand knows my name," Gudgeon concludes that the song is partly autobiographical: "... this song is as much about another man who reached the 'heights' but never found fame: Stan himself. With MacDonnell, Stan found a partner in obscurity" (Gudgeon 1993, 172-173).

Apart from the fact that this is a somewhat ungenerous assessment in an otherwise notably uncritical biography, Gudgeon here overlooks the fact that, in many of his songs, Rogers assumes the first-

person voice of his protagonist(s) and may have started writing "MacDonnell on the Heights" from a similar point-of-view. Eight of the ten songs on *From Fresh Water* are sung, at least in part, in the first person. With this in mind, it may be the case that, when Rogers began writing the song, he used the same first-person voice but then decided to do something different with "MacDonnell ...". But I think a more likely explanation—and this directly contradicts Gudgeon's interpretation—is that Rogers the singer could not identify sufficiently with his character to assume its voice. This comes out in other ways, such as the lack of personal detail about MacDonnell/Macdonell: he was, according to Rogers, a "too-thin Eastern Township Scot;" but we have no clues from the song as to his age, his military rank, his station in civilian life, his attitudes towards the enemy or his superiors. The lack of detail about the central protagonist and his role in the battle—for example, when and how Macdonell arrived at Queenston, whether he was successful in routing the enemy, or even who won—stands in marked contrast to the rich cast of characters and careful attention to the unfolding of events in the other songs considered here and elsewhere in Rogers' body of work. But, if "MacDonnell on the Heights" is not in many respects a typical Stan Rogers composition, another song about the War of 1812 on the same album, *From Fresh Water*, is more characteristic both of Rogers' musical stylings and in his choice of hero/protagonist, in the form of Captain Alexander Mackintosh, sailing master of the schooner, *Nancy*.

Captain Alexander Mackintosh and the Nancy

Wasaga Beach is best-known today as one of Ontario's most popular resort towns, its long golden beaches at the southern end of Georgian Bay making it a sometimes-overcrowded summer playground. But in the latter stages of the War of 1812-14, this long sandspit at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River was a vital staging point on supply routes between the heartland of British North America and its military outposts on the upper Great Lakes and, especially, the strategically important island fortress of Michilimackinac at the entrance to Lake Michigan. Unknown to many tourists, Wasaga Beach is also home to Nancy Island Historic Site, last resting place of the schooner, *Nancy*, which for much of the last year of the War of 1812-14 was the only British/Canadian warship on the upper Great Lakes. At the entrance to the Site on the bank of the Nottawasaga River is a monument hosting two plaques. One commemorates the exploits of Ayling and Reed who, in 1934, took off from Wasaga Beach to make the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight from mainland Canada to England. The other plaque, erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, bears the following inscription:

THE NANCY

On the opposite bank stood a blockhouse built in August 1814 by Lieutenant Miller Worsley, R.N., to protect the NANCY, the only British ship remaining on Lake Huron. Worsley's small band of sailors and a few Indians gallantly defended their post against three enemy vessels, three companies of infantry, and numerous guns. The blockhouse was blown up and the NANCY burned to the waterline on 14 August. Worsley and his men escaped upriver, made their way to Michilimackinac in open boats, evading the American blockade, and afterwards captured the two blockading vessels.

The schooner called Nancy or The Nancy was built in Detroit for the firm of Forsyth, Richardson & Co., fur traders of Montreal, and was probably named after the daughter of John Richardson, a partner in the firm (Snider 1926, 73). She was launched in September 1789 and made her maiden voyage from Detroit to Fort Erie in Spring 1790, although the ship was built principally for navigation of the upper Great Lakes, especially from the port of Moy (now within the bounds of the City of Windsor) on the Detroit River to the Grand Portage at Sault Ste. Marie, the entrance to Lake Superior and the North-West (see Cruikshank 1964).

Ownership of the vessel changed hands several times over the next two decades or so; but, at the Declaration of War by the United States on July 1, 1812, Nancy was co-owned by Angus McIntosh, a fur trader and factor for the Northwest Fur Company, who owned a mansion and trading post at The Moy. She was pressed into government service, transporting troops and supplies to assist the war effort on the British/Canadian side. In 1813, she was carrying supplies from Amherstburg and Moy to the Michilimackinac (or Mackinac), the British-occupied island fortress which controlled the entrance to Lake Michigan, a ten-day journey on average, seven days of which were spent making her way up the Detroit River, across Lake St. Clair and through the rapids on the St. Clair River before reaching the open waters of Lake Huron. Following the Battle of Lake Erie (also called the Battle of Put-In Bay) in September 1813, which saw the capture of much of the British fleet, the Nancy was the only British warship west of Lake Ontario and she therefore became a prime target for the American forces. In October, 1813, under the command of Captain Alexander Mackintosh (nephew of co-owner Angus), Nancy narrowly escaped capture by an American militia unit along the St. Clair River. She was making her way south from Mackinac carrying gunpowder and other supplies either to The Moy or Amherstburg but, when he learned that the British garrison at Amherstburg had fallen and that American warships were lying in wait, Mackintosh reversed course. With rigging and sails badly damaged, the Nancy traversed the St. Clair rapids into Lake Huron, eventually making her way to Sault Ste. Marie where she

spent the winter.

In spring and summer 1814, the schooner resumed its task of supplying the outpost at Ft. Michilimackinac, plying its trade from the new supply base at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River on Georgian Bay. In August 1814, however, the American brig Niagara and schooners Scorpion and Tigress trapped Nancy in the Nottawasaga River where she was burned and sunk. Subsequently, Captain Mackintosh and the crew of the Nancy joined the expedition led by Lieutenant Miller Worsley, RN, and Lieutenant Robert Livingston of the Indian Department, which pursued the two American schooners for some 360 miles—by canoe and bateau—before eventually seizing them and restoring British supremacy in the Upper Great Lakes. Over the next century, an island formed around the wreck of Nancy in the mouth of the Nottawasaga River. In the late 1920s, she was salvaged, and today the ship's keel and some of her timbers may be seen at the museum at Nancy Island Historic Site, part of the Provincial Park at Wasaga Beach.

Stan Rogers' song, "The Nancy," focuses for the most part on one brief episode from the schooner's twenty-five years afloat—her escape from capture along the St. Clair River, following the fall of the British garrison at Amherstburg in October 1813. The first verse establishes the populist credentials of her sailing master, Captain Mackintosh, although, as with Macdonell/MacDonnell, Rogers uses an alternative spelling of the surname—whether as poetic device or in the interests of limited generalization, he calls him "MacIntosh."

The clothes men wear do give them airs, the fellows to
compare.
A colonel's regimentals shine, and women call them fair.
I am Alexander MacIntosh, a nephew to the Laird
And I do disdain men who are vain, the men with powdered
hair.

Mackintosh may have been "a nephew to the Laird" (his uncle Angus returned to Scotland in 1831 to become chief of the McIntosh clan), but he scorns the airs and pretensions of the officer class, the "military gentlemen" in their "regimentals" and "powdered hair."

Over seven verses and four (varying) refrains, the narrative unfolds. The Nancy sails from The Moy towards Amherstburg, carrying supplies and passengers, including a Captain Maxwell "with his wife and kids and powdered hair" (the last descriptor typecasting Maxwell in the Rogers/Mackintosh scheme of things). Learning from "a friendly Wyandott [Indian]" that Amherstburg has fallen and that a fifty-strong militia cavalry unit is on its way, Captain Maxwell urges Mackintosh to surrender his boat and demands to be put ashore. When Colonel Beaubien (presumed to be an enemy) also urges surrender, Mackintosh

refuses and, after a dozen broadsides, the American troops flee, to the cheers of his ship's crew as she heads back up the river towards Lake Huron and Mackinac.

Oh, military gentlemen, they bluster, roar and pray.
Nine sailors and the Nancy, boys, made fifty run away.
The powder in their hair that day was powder sent their way
By poor and ragged sailor men, who swore that they would
stay.
Aboard the Nancy!
Six pence and found a day
Aboard the Nancy!
No uniform for men to scorn, aboard the Nancy-o.

Most scholarly and military/naval histories of the War of 1812 pay little attention to the Nancy prior to her sinking and the subsequent retaliatory expedition to capture Scorpion and Tigress. Apart from sources already cited in this section, there is little discussion of her early history and, as far as I can tell from secondary sources (such as Collins 1998; or Perkins 1989), there are no plaques or markers commemorating her history other than those at Nancy Island. There, perhaps not surprisingly, the emphasis is on Nancy's last days and on the subsequent retaliatory expedition to capture Scorpion and Tigress. A 15-minute video shown to visitors in the museum theatre makes no mention either of Mackintosh or of the escape of 1813—the principal focus is on the sinking of "The Nancy" and the response—the "hero," at least for present purposes, is Lieutenant Worsley.

The same emphasis and omissions are evident in the single-sheet tri-fold brochure on the Historic Site, published by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and available in the Gift Shop. Among the exhibits in the museum itself, however, are a number of barrels with plastic or glass tops, lit from below, which are used to convey information. One of these barrel-tops bears a portrait of Mackintosh, another (shared with Lt. Worsley) briefly outlines his biography. The latter offers a version of the events of October 1813:

... Mackintosh courageously defended the Nancy during the incident at St. Clair rapids in 1813. Captain Mackintosh had returned to the mouth of the St. Clair River in October 1813 to find Detroit and Amherstburg in American hands and two armed schooners and two gunboats lying in wait for him. Mackintosh refused to surrender. The Nancy, although damaged and set afire, survived and escaped into Lake Huron.

The so-called "incident at St. Clair rapids" is not elucidated further anywhere in the museum. Nor, when I visited, did the gift shop carry

any publications about Nancy or the naval campaign on the Great Lakes in the War of 1812-14. Stan Rogers therefore chose a less publicized episode in the history of the War and the history of the boat called Nancy. The amount of detail in the song suggests that, in his research for The Great Lakes Project/From Fresh Water, he came across a small pamphlet entitled "Leaves from the War Log of The Nancy, Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen" (Snider 1936). Therein, both the reprints of original log entries by Captain Alexander Mackintosh and the running commentary by C.H.J. ("Jerry") Snider, one of those responsible for salvaging Nancy in the 1920s, provide ample insight into the events of October 6, 1813 and, to some lesser degree, into the character of the schooner's captain. The details of Rogers' song are all there: Mackintosh's relationship to "the Laird," the names of Captain Maxwell and (Lieutenant-)Colonel Beaubien, the events of the skirmish, elements of the captain's "salt-of-the-earth" character, the fact that Nancy carried a nine-man crew ("Nine sailors and the Nancy, boys, made fifty run away") who were all employees of the Northwest Fur Company and therefore did not wear military uniforms ("No uniforms for men to scorn, aboard the Nancy-o")—these are the kinds of details so evidently absent from the lyrics of "MacDonnell on the Heights." "The Nancy" is therefore a much more typical Stan Rogers' song. This is evident in the narrative form of the story, interspersed with periodic refrains, in the fine detail of names and the ordering of events, in the selection of a hero—Mackintosh is, despite his "noble" Scottish birth, much more like the owner-operators and independent commodity producers (sailing captains, farmers, ranchers, fishers) who populate so many other Rogers songs than the "too thin ... Eastern Township Scot," Macdonell. Moreover, Mackintosh is a populist. Despite his noble birth, he clearly feels more at ease with his crewmen than with "the gentlemen with powdered hair."

The song is also more typical of Rogers in musical terms. In contrast to the stately tempo of "MacDonnell on the Heights," with its orchestral strings, the arrangement of "The Nancy" is much closer to the style which earned Rogers the nickname "Steeleye Stan," a play on the name of the 1970s British electric-folk revival band, Steeleye Span. Powered by an accompaniment of long-necked mandolins, flute, penny whistle, electric guitar, bass and drums, Rogers' bass-baritone roars out the verses and choruses, with odd instrumental interludes, moving the song along at a healthy clip—6/8 time or something close, although he throws in a few extra notes and beats in the refrain to wrong foot the unwary listener ... or band member. And, while MacDonnell/Macdonell is addressed in the second person ("You brought the field all standing"), Rogers here assumes the first-person voice of Macdonell's contemporary Alexander Mackintosh ("Surrender, Hell!" I say/Aboard the Nancy!/ "It's back to Mackinac I'll fight, aboard the Nancy-o").

At the same time, the geography of events is somewhat confusing in Rogers' song. Rogers has Captain Mackintosh and The Nancy

heading, in stanza 2, from The Moy towards Amherstburg, a route which would have taken them down the Detroit River, not through the St. Clair Rapids. In fact, they had sailed south from Michilimackinac across Lake Huron, carrying gunpowder and other supplies bound for the relief of Amherstburg, as well as a number of passengers including Captain Maxwell and his family. Anchoring at the entrance to the St. Clair River, Mackintosh sent scouts to find out if it were safe to continue. Black Bird, a friendly local chief, informed him that a fort had fallen, but not which one. In a strong wind, The Nancy lost her main anchor and drifted into the St. Clair River and down the rapids. On the evening of October 5th, she hove to below the rapids and Mackintosh learned from his scouts that Amherstburg had fallen to the Americans. On the morning of October 6th, Mackintosh heard that American horsemen were on their way. He determined to blow the vessel up to prevent the gunpowder and supplies from falling into enemy hands. Captain Maxwell asked to be put ashore with his family and other passengers, but they were immediately taken prisoner. Mackintosh was hailed by Lieutenant-Colonel Beaubien who demanded the surrender of both the vessel and its cargo, claiming that he had a force of fifty men who would fire on The Nancy if she attempted to set sail.

But the loyalties of Beaubien are unclear, not only in Rogers's song, but also in other histories. In his report to Captain Richard Bullock, the commanding officer at Fort Michilimackinac, Mackintosh stated that he was "hailed from the shore by a Canadian" and that this man was "Lieutenant-Colonel Beaubien of the militia" (Snider 1936). Snider notes that there were Beaubiens living on both sides of the river at this time. But, since Mackintosh's log reports that he placed both of The Nancy's guns on the larboard (port) side to ward off any attack, and The Nancy was headed north up the St. Clair River towards Lake Huron (Snider 1936, xxi), we may assume that Beaubien's troops were on the west bank—i.e., the American side—of the river.

These, however, are mere details. The test of the significance of Rogers' song lies not in the accuracy of historical or geographical minutiae, but in its archival function, serving as a record—in both senses of the term—of a neglected episode and hero of the War of 1812-14. In most histories of the War, and in the museum dedicated to "her" memory, it is the sinking of The Nancy in August 1814 that is emphasized, along with the subsequent expedition (led by Lieutenant Worsley) to avenge the loss of the ship and to maintain supply lines to Fort Michilimackinac. Such accounts neglect the crucial role played by Mackintosh. Without his heroic efforts to prevent The Nancy, and her cargo, from falling into enemy hands in early October 1813, the Americans would have exercised naval control on Lake Huron and the citadel at Mackinac would inevitably have been captured—the course of the War, at least on the Upper Great Lakes, would have changed. Mackintosh, and The Nancy, made history; Stan Rogers, aided and abetted by Jerry Snider, has documented it.

Summary/Conclusions

In this article, I examine three songs by the late Canadian singer-songwriter, Stan Rogers. Each of these songs documents or "records" a particular event of the War of 1812-14, the war which helped to cement Canada's borders, at least in the eastern half of the country, and which, according to many sources, was one of the formative events in the emergence of a fragile but enduring sense of nationhood. Each song commemorates a central protagonist who is presented as a potential Canadian hero, one whose contribution to the war effort, and to Canada's development as an independent political community, has been overlooked in elite or official constructions of history. In keeping with one of the principal methods of his songwriting technique, Rogers appears to have set out to "salvage" or reclaim these events and heroes—indeed, in two of the three songs, Rogers addresses directly the neglect of these heroic figures.

In the analysis of each song, I have pursued a number of objectives. First, I have placed each song within the context of Rogers' development as a songwriter and as an example of his songwriting technique—in particular, his use of "salvaging" as both metaphor and method. Second, I have attempted to test the historical accuracy of the stories portrayed in Rogers' songs, or at least to assess the balance between "creativity" and "actuality" in his "documenting" of key events of the War of 1812-14. Third, where possible, I have tried to examine the validity of Rogers' assertion that his central characters, or the events in which they participated, have been neglected by academic and professional historians.

They may have come from very different social backgrounds, but Billy Green, "the Scout," Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell, Attorney-General of Upper Canada, and Captain Alexander Mackintosh, nephew to the Laird, all played significant roles in British/Canadian victories in the War of 1812-14, a war from which the embryo nation of "Canada" emerged as victor—or, if it didn't win, it at least managed a respectable tie when all the odds were against it (see Turner 1990). But, while the events in which they participated have, for the most part, been commemorated by monuments, statues and plaques erected by a variety of governmental agencies (Mackintosh's refusal to surrender The Nancy in the so-called "incident" at St. Clair Rapids is the principal exception), none of these three has been represented as a central character in the "official" versions of history, the construction of which has tended to serve the political purposes of the day.

For at least a hundred years after 1812, "official" or "governmental" history focused principally on maintaining links with Britain and the Empire—hence the glorification of Brock and, to a lesser extent, Sheaffe, Harvey and Vincent, and Worsley. Imperial histories

also tend to privilege the contributions of those who were expatriate officials of the colonial government or officers in the imperial (in this case, the British) army at the expense of locals, "citizens" of the colony, whether they be members or officers of the Canadian militia (Macdonell), employees of fur trading companies pressed into service of the Crown (Mackintosh), or civilians temporarily recruited as "scouts" because of their knowledge of local circumstance and terrain (Green).

In his songs about the War of 1812-14, however, Stan Rogers presents a subversive or resistant reading of the official history, emphasizing the roles of "local" heroes, of "ordinary Canadians" (even if, like many Canadians, they were born elsewhere), the kinds of characters who have inhabited many of his musical stories. At the same time, Rogers creates an alternative, counter-hegemonic, mythology about the significance of the War of 1812. In his version, the meta-narrative of the War was not about Britain saving Canada from falling into the clutches of the United States; rather, it was about Canadians, albeit aided and abetted by British allies who were often serving their own interests, acquiring the self-confidence to assert, first and foremost, that "We are not American." Official acts of commemoration have equated this assertion with loyalty to the Crown, especially in the face of what was seen as the great betrayal of the American Independence movement. Counter to this official ideology runs another, populist, strand of Canadian nationalism, of which Rogers was undoubtedly a part, which is proud to claim "we are neither British nor American." Stan Rogers offers in his words and music a resistant reading of the significance of the War of 1812-14 and makes his own contribution to a popular or vernacular history of Canada by salvaging and recording the exploits of Billy Green, John Macdonell, Alexander Mackintosh—"unsung" Canadian heroes, one and all.

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