

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

Military Defenders of Prince Edward Island, 1775 — 1864

J. Mackay Hitsman

Volume 43, numéro 1, 1964

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300439ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300439ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Hitsman, J. M. (1964). Military Defenders of Prince Edward Island, 1775 — 1864. *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada*, 43(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300439ar>

MILITARY DEFENDERS OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND 1775 — 1864

J. MACKAY HITSMAN
Historical Section, Army Headquarters
Ottawa

My purpose tonight is to suggest how quiet and peaceful has been the military history of this island province, not to try and create a good story about fearless defenders who were longing to be tested. That there never was any real occasion to test them is, I think you must agree, because the Royal Navy continued supreme in North American waters.

French surrender of the fortress of Louisbourg on July 26, 1758, to the British forces commanded by Admiral the Hon. Edward Boscawen and Major-General Jeffrey Amherst, also provided for the capitulation of Isle Saint-Jean. Most of its Acadian inhabitants were subsequently deported; a few New Englanders arrived.¹ After St. John's Island became a separate province from Nova Scotia in 1769, its 270 inhabitants were joined by about 1,000 English and Scottish settlers. Since the island had been divided into lots and granted to proprietors for development, these settlers were leasehold tenants to absentee landlords, a fact which was to dominate the history of the island for the period covered in this paper.²

During the summer and autumn of 1775 a number of disillusioned settlers enlisted in the Royal Highland Emigrants and left for service against the revolting American Colonies.³ The remaining inhabitants of the island had never even been assembled as a militia, so Charlottetown was defenceless when two American privateers appeared on November 17. After plundering the principal homes they carried off the acting Governor, Philips Callbeck, and another member of the Executive Council.⁴ General George Washington, however, deplored this unauthorized action, which could only damage the American cause morally, and ordered their release as soon as they were brought to his headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁵

¹ D. C. Harvey, *The French Regime in Prince Edward Island*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1926.

² Frank MacKinnon, *The Government of Prince Edward Island*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951.

³ Public Archives of Canada, Prince Edward Island A/3, Callbeck to Dartmouth, Jan. 5, 1776.

⁴ P.E.I. A/3, Stewart to Dartmouth, Dec. 8, 1775.

⁵ John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799*, Washington, 1931, IV, 152.

The defenceless state of St. John's Island, and reported treasonable utterances by some of its Acadian inhabitants, subsequently resulted in the returned acting Governor Callbeck bombarding Major-General Sir William Howe at Halifax with appeals for arms and military stores for the 100 men he hoped to recruit for local defence.⁶ Howe replied on June 4, 1776, however, that Vice-Admiral Lord Shulldham of the Blue was sending a sloop to protect Charlottetown and instructing a frigate from Quebec to keep the area under surveillance. "As this is Judged the most advisable Expedient at present," this letter continued, "and the Cannon at Charlotte Town, without an Established post or some force, only affording a Temptation to the Rebels to disturb the peace of the Island, the Admiral at my request, has given directions for bringing them away, and in consequence of this Determination, the Company you intended to raise becomes an unnecessary measure."⁷

Continued activities by American privateers and the French declaration of war in 1778 resulted in second thoughts. Another Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Clinton, transferred Major Timothy Hierlihy's five companies of provincials (or loyalists) from Cape Breton to Charlottetown, where they arrived on July 16, 1778.⁸ By this time Callbeck had gone ahead and raised a local company consisting of himself as captain, three other officers and 44 men; but an attempt to increase its strength by recruiting in Newfoundland met with indifferent success, since most of the 70 contracted men changed their minds and disappeared before a ship was available to transport them to Charlottetown.⁹ A small battery was again erected at Charlottetown. In mid-August of 1778 the crews of another two American privateers landed at St. Peter's and were able to make off with two schooners before either the brigantine H.M.S. *Cabot* or a detachment of provincial troops could get there.¹⁰

During June, 1779 a second small battery of guns was added to the defences of Charlottetown.¹¹ The garrison was temporarily augmented on October 29 when, according to a despatch subsequently sent to London:

...there arrived here The *Camille* man of war (Capt. Collins) with the *Archer* Transport, which had on board 5 Officers and 200 Hessians, of General Knyphausen's Corps; They are commanded by Colonel Borok; They were on their Passage from New York, for Quebec, but the Transport being in Bad Condition for Sailing, and Capt. Collins thinking it dangerous to proceed further, he left them here; I have Quartered They Officers pretty well, They Men have Built Warm Comfort-

⁶ Correspondence on P.E.I. A/3.

⁷ P.E.I. A/3, Howe to Callbeck, June 4, 1776.

⁸ P.E.I. A/4, Callbeck to Germain, Aug. 18, 1778; Clinton to Hierlihy, Sept. 12, 1778.

⁹ P.E.I. A/4, Nesbitt to De Grey, Dec. 15, 1779.

¹⁰ P.E.I. A/4, Callbeck to Germain, Aug. 18, 1778.

¹¹ P.E.I. A/4, Nesbitt to De Grey, Dec. 15, 1779.

able Huts for themselves, and I have procured 71 Head of Black Cattle, besides a sufficiency of Rum, to serve them until the middle of June next.¹²

On June 28, 1780 Governor Walter Patterson finally returned to his post, after five years' absence in England. The short-lived enthusiasm engendered by his return resulted in a militia bill being finally approved by the Legislative Assembly. According to this Militia Act, "all male Persons, Planters and Inhabitants, and their Servants, between the ages of Sixteen and Sixty, residing in, and belonging to this Island" were to be enrolled in companies.¹³ Each man was obliged to provide himself with a firearm, and attend a regimental muster twice a year. Governor Patterson wrote to London on July 30, however, that he would do nothing to organize a militia until a supply of muskets should be received.¹⁴ In a subsequent letter to the military commander at Halifax, Patterson argued that, if the British Government would pay for the construction of a network of roads, and supply sufficient arms and ammunition, it should be possible to rely completely on the militia for defence of the island. Furthermore, since the best way to ensure being left alone was to appear unimportant, he recommended that the existing garrison at Charlottetown should be reduced.¹⁵

The request for arms and ammunition was granted. These were forwarded from Halifax during the early summer of 1781, along with orders to withdraw Major Hierlihy's five companies as soon as it should prove possible to increase Captain Callbeck's company to 100 men.¹⁶ Not only was such an augmentation impossible, but many of its continuing 32 rank and file were too old or infirm for any active service.¹⁷ Still the possibility of danger was steadily becoming less. A strength return of January 23, 1783 showed the Charlottetown garrison as being only eight officers and 110 other ranks — or two companies of the provincial corps of King's Rangers.¹⁸

The post-war garrison of Charlottetown was two companies of British regulars, detached from one of the infantry regiments of the line stationed at Halifax.¹⁹ Since there was no conceivable danger so long as units of the Royal Navy were based on Halifax, and the youthful United States possessed no naval force whatsoever, the Legislature of St. John's Island merely renewed its existing Militia Act whenever it expired. Loyalist newcomers and other settlers who decided to remain

¹² P.E.I. A/4, Desbrisay to Germain, Dec. 7, 1779.

¹³ 20 Geo. III, cap. 1.

¹⁴ P.E.I. A/4, Patterson to Germain, July 30, 1780.

¹⁵ P.E.I. A/4, Patterson to McLean, Oct. 10, 1780.

¹⁶ P.E.I. A/4, Patterson to Germain, June 9, 1781; Patterson to Campbell, Sept. 16, 1781.

¹⁷ P.E.I. A/4, Desbrisay to Germain, Oct. 27, 1781.

¹⁸ P.A.C., Nova Scotia A/102, Patterson to Townshend, Jan. 23, 1783.

¹⁹ P.A.C., C/369, Smith to Richmond, Feb. 22, 1819.

on the island, as tenant farmers when freehold land was available elsewhere, were merely enrolled on paper as militiamen.

British policy following the outbreak of war with Revolutionary France in 1793 was to attack its colonial empire, so three of the four regiments of foot garrisoning the Nova Scotia district were ordered to the West Indies.²⁰ With them went the two companies garrisoning Charlottetown.²¹ Naturally Lieutenant-Governor Edmund Fanning was perturbed. Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State responsible for both the war and most North American affairs, ignored Fanning's suggestion of April 20 that the British regulars might be replaced by a garrison of locally raised provincial troops or fencibles, which should function as a mobile reserve rather than attempt to man expensive fortifications.²² On August 10 Dundas wrote that arms and ammunition were being despatched for the militia, who should be capable of repelling any predatory raid.²³ There really was little to worry about, because Brigadier-General James Ogilvie's Halifax garrison had effected a peaceful occupation of the French colony of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon in June, to prevent its becoming a French base for privateering, and the French navy was temporarily disorganized because most of its best officers had been purged by the Revolution.

In a letter dated December 1, 1793, however, Fanning expressed the hope that companies of the provincial regiments newly raised in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia might be ordered to St. John's Island in the spring, since the militia could not be expected to perform military service during the planting season.²⁴ Instead Dundas authorized Fanning, in a letter of February 5, 1794, to raise a two-company provincial corps not exceeding 200 men from among the inhabitants, with the usual proportion of officers and sergeants. Although appointed commandant, Fanning was to receive neither pay nor emoluments. Company officers were to be selected from among those on the British Army's half-pay list. Each was expected to recruit a specified quota of men, even though this increased the possibility of old men and mere boys being enlisted. All the other ranks were to receive the same pay and scale of clothing as regulars, but their area of service was restricted to St. John's Island.²⁵ In addition to the authorized levy money of two guineas, Fanning's recruiting notice of May 12 offered 100 acres of land to all who enlisted before November 1, 1794.²⁶ Sufficient land had been re-possessioned from proprietors to make such freehold grants possible and this was a real

²⁰ Public Record Office, C.O. 42/93, Dundas to Clarke, May 1, 1793.

²¹ P.E.I. A/13, Fanning to Ogilvie, April 17, 1793.

²² P.E.I. A/13, Fanning to Dundas, April 20, 1793.

²³ P.E.I. A/13, Dundas to Fanning, Aug. 10, 1793.

²⁴ P.E.I. A/13, Fanning to King, Dec. 1, 1793.

²⁵ P.E.I. A/13, Dundas to Fanning, Feb. 5, 1794.

²⁶ P.E.I. A/13, Fanning to Dundas, May 22, 1794.

inducement for tenant farmers. Yet Fanning's corps never seems to have achieved more than half of its authorized strength at any one time. Moreover, many of the men continued working on their own land, or that of their officers, leaving the actual garrison duties to the 30 or more men recruited in Newfoundland.²⁷ The pay of these last seems to have been kept permanently in arrears, possibly as a deterrent against desertion.

Fanning's letter of April 20, 1793, had advised Mr. Dundas that the militia was organized on paper into three battalions, but that there were practically no arms or accoutrements available. Although there had always been a "general opposition" to a militia, Fanning considered that the inhabitants were loyal and would rally to defend the island against any invader.²⁸ During the autumn of 1793, 200 stands of arms and a quantity of small arms ammunition arrived from Halifax, with the promise that some artillery would follow. When no danger materialized, the inhabitants soon lost any interest they might have momentarily taken in the militia.²⁹ One militia muster, which the Lieutenant-Governor attended in Prince County in September 1797, was reported to the British Government by an antagonistic proprietor as follows :

The People being warned attended the Muster and their appearance was a Burlesque upon anything that was ever called a Militia; out of about 300 men not more than 5 or Six had Muskets, and they were so rusty that they were unfit for Service and some of the rest had sticks.

When the Muster Roll was called and some names were inserted that was not in it before the Men were dismissed and told that they might go to their own houses.³⁰

Everywhere in North America, however, it was customary for most men to enjoy some rum or whiskey with neighbours after parade, which provided a welcome change from the dreary toil of earning a livelihood. In practice, moreover, acquisition of a militia commission was a necessary prerequisite for any ambitious citizen interested in politics or employment as a Crown official.

The general peace resulting from the Treaty signed at Amiens on March 27, 1802, was sufficient to effect a reduction in British garrisons in North America and the disbandment of the several provincial corps.³¹

²⁷ P.E.I. A/16, "A detail of Various Transactions at Prince Edward Island, and in particular the Conduct of Certain Persons Entrusted with the Affairs of Government on that Island, submitted to Mr. Vansittart at the Treasury and Mr. Sullivan at the Secretary of State's Office by J. Hill, a Proprietor", n.d.

²⁸ P.E.I. A/13, Fanning to Dundas, April 20, 1793.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1793.

³⁰ P.E.I. A/16, "A detail of Various Transactions at Prince Edward Island, and in particular the Conduct of Certain Persons Entrusted with the Affairs of Government on that Island, submitted to Mr. Vansittart at the Treasury and Mr. Sullivan at the Secretary of State's Office by J. Hill, a Proprietor", n.d.

³¹ C.O. 217/78, Bowyer to Hobart, Aug. 16, 1803.

Thus Prince Edward Island was defenceless when war between Britain and France broke out anew on May 16, 1803, except for a "small and dispers'd Body of unarm'd and undisciplin'd Militia."³² Lieutenant-General Henry Bowyer could spare from Halifax only a subaltern, sergeant, two corporals, one bugler and 18 privates of the 60th (or Royal American) Regiment of Foot for duty on Prince Edward Island. Such a detachment, Bowyer admitted, was sufficient only to prevent its seat of government being "insulted" by privateers or other raiders.³³ On August 1, 1803 the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, authorized the formation of fencible regiments for each of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Canada,³⁴ but he wisely refrained from making any attempt to raise another unit in the thinly populated Prince Edward Island. During the summer of 1804, however, a company of the Nova Scotia Fencibles took over garrison duties at Charlottetown. A year later, it was replaced by a company of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry, when that unit traded stations with the Nova Scotia Fencibles.³⁵ In June, 1808, No. 4 Company of the New Brunswick Fencibles became the garrison of Prince Edward Island. Commanded by Captain Thomas Christian, it comprised two lieutenants, one ensign, four sergeants, two corporals, 53 privates and four boys.³⁶ There was a change in title in 1810, when the New Brunswick Fencibles was taken on the regular British establishment as the 104th Regiment of Foot. According to the appreciation of the military situation in North America made by Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost for the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies on May 18, 1812 :

The Islands of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island, dependencies of the British North American Provinces, are garrisoned by small Detachments of Troops stationed at the principal Town in each, but their Works of defence are so insignificant, as to be unworthy of observation; nor does their militia amount to any considerable number deserving to be noticed.³⁷

Following the outbreak of war with the United States on June 18, 1812, Lieutenant-Governor J. F. W. DesBarres, an elderly half-pay officer of the 60th Royal Americans, suggested raising a fencible corps of 500 men. In view of what had happened earlier, however, the Duke of York rejected this proposal. He thought that the militia should be able to contribute sufficiently to the defence of the island and that any inhabitants interested in military service elsewhere might enlist

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ C/718, York to Hunter, etc., Aug. 1, 1803.

³⁵ P.R.O., W.O.17/2353 and 2354, Monthly Strength Returns, Nova Scotia, 1804-1805.

³⁶ W. Austin Squires, *The 104th Regiment of Foot (The New Brunswick Regiment) 1803-1817*, Fredericton, 1962, 75-76.

³⁷ C.O.42/146, Prevost to Liverpool, May 18, 1812.

in existing corps.³⁸ During the previous winter the island had been visited by recruiting parties for the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles being organized in the Canadas; similar parties returned during the following winter to seek reinforcements.

Since Prince Edward Island enjoyed no sizable trade with the United States and was remote, the province continued a quiet backwater, with its tenant farmers mainly interested in their perennial dispute with the landlords and their agents.³⁹ When a new Lieutenant-Governor, Charles D. Smith, reached Charlottetown on July 24, 1813, he found most of the militia still in a "most undisciplined State" and without an Inspecting Field Officer from the British Army to supervise training.⁴⁰ Smith had managed to obtain some arms when he had stopped off at Halifax *en route*, but no further troops. The stock answer to all such requests was that "Sir John Sherbrooke will always afford such assistance as may be necessary for defence of P.E. Island but the exigencies of the service in N. America require that the Troops should not be placed in situations where there is but little prospect of attack."⁴¹ During August, 1814 the company of the 104th Regiment was ordered to join the balance of the unit in Canada and was replaced at Charlottetown by a company of the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion, which had been doing garrison duty in Canada since 1807. Actually a large percentage of No. 4 Company of the 104th had been as aged and unfit as were the personnel of the 10th Royal Veterans, and a number remained behind as Royal Veterans instead of going to Canada.⁴²

Drastic reductions to the strength of the British Army following the return of peace, resulted in the Charlottetown garrison being reduced to merely a subaltern's command in 1818. When it was proposed to remove even this token force early in 1819, Lieutenant-Governor Smith protested vehemently. His letter of February 22 argued that the island's regular garrison never had been adequate for what it was expected to do: that is, guard government stores, enforce the Navigation Acts and other British legislation, and provide aid to the civil power if called on. The minimum strength necessary, according to Smith's reasoning, was three officers and from 60 to 100 men.⁴³

The real reason for Smith's protest, which would be re-echoed by successive lieutenant-governors whenever a British Government suggested the garrison's withdrawal, was a real fear that the widespread agitation for freehold tenure of land might cause serious disorders. Thus the tiny

³⁸ C.O.226/26, Torrens to Goulborn, Nov. 14, 1812.

³⁹ C.O.226/27, Townshend to Bathurst, March 31, 1813.

⁴⁰ C.O.226/27, Smith to Bathurst, Aug. 19, 1813.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1813.

⁴² Squires, *The 104th Regiment of Foot (The New Brunswick Regiment) 1803-1817*, 169.

⁴³ C/369, Smith to Richmond, Feb. 22, 1819.

garrison of British regulars continued as potential aid to the civil power, generally as an understrength company of one of the infantry regiments stationed at Halifax.

The one day of annual training prescribed for the militia was considered to be all that was necessary. Actually the authorities must have been relieved that there were no muskets available for issue to the Militia. "That force in this Island," Lieutenant-Governor Sir Henry Vere Huntley would later report, "although efficient in numbers, I regret to say has never been so in any other respect, the resources of the Colony being unequal to meet the expenses of clothing, arming, or even of properly training the men; the Militia has in consequence received little more attention than that comprized in an annual Muster, and as careful a selection of persons to fill the situations of Officers as the state of the Community has permitted."⁴⁴

Agitation over the land question in 1843 had caused Lieutenant-Governor Huntley to request a second company of infantry and artillerymen from Major-General Sir Jeremiah Dickson, who was commanding at Halifax. According to this letter of March 27, large bodies of men were meeting in King's County to administer illegal oaths, and to threaten the lives of neighbours who refused either to collaborate or to leave. One man's home had already been burned.⁴⁵ The barracks at Charlottetown could accommodate only the existing garrison of two officers, three non-commissioned officers and 83 privates of the 2nd Battalion, Rifle Brigade, and a surgeon, but the Legislative Assembly voted 1,000 pounds sterling to be used for the erection of additional barracks if the British Government would add a second company to the garrison.⁴⁶

A further and more anxious appeal for help by Lieutenant-Governor Huntley, dated April 17, caused Major-General Dickson to order a lieutenant, one sergeant and 20 rank and file to Charlottetown.⁴⁷ On May 29 Huntley replied that this reinforcement should "demonstrate the determination and disposition" of the British Government to "suppress disaffection and disorder here."⁴⁸ A letter from the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, however, subsequently informed Huntley that there was no need to erect additional barracks at Charlottetown: even the existing garrison should not be regarded as permanent and was subject to withdrawal to Halifax.⁴⁹

Although military useless, and left at 80 rank and file following the desertion of 20 men in the single year 1849, a regular garrison

⁴⁴ W.O.1/543, Huntley to Gladstone, Feb. 24, 1846.

⁴⁵ W.O.1/539, Huntley to Dickson, March 27, 1843.

⁴⁶ W.O.1/539, Huntley to Stanley, May 9, 1834.

⁴⁷ W.O.1/539, Huntley to Dickson, April 17, 1843; also Somerset to Hope, May 31, 1843.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, May 29, 1843.

⁴⁹ W.O.1/539, Stanley to Huntley, June 2, 1843.

continued at Charlottetown.⁵⁰ The British Government did, however, threaten to withdraw the garrison unless the number of deserters was greatly curtailed.⁵¹ Desertion was a problem that had long plagued the British Army in most of its colonies and 199 soldiers had managed to desert to the United States from the garrisons in Canada during the same year.⁵² In Prince Edward Island most farmers were too poor to want to hide away a deserter as a hired man and he was likely to be turned in to the authorities for the five pounds reward money, unless lucky enough to be married to a local girl whose friends would help to smuggle them both away in a visiting American fishing boat. After advising the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in this vein, Lieutenant-Governor Sir Ambrose Bannerman wrote on April 9, 1852, that it would be most inexpedient to withdraw the regular troops at this time. The Militia Act passed by his Legislature in 1851 had eliminated even the one day of annual muster, except in time of war, civil commotion or other emergency. Furthermore, "on any emergency, in all probability of an Agrarian nature, they are the last force I should dream of employing on such occasions. The number which are liable to be enrolled amounts to above 8000 and *two hundred* old serviceable flint muskets, are all the arms at my disposal in this Colony."⁵³

Yet Bannerman had been unwise enough to turn down a request from about 50 citizens who wanted to form a company of volunteers, an action which caused consternation at the War Office.⁵⁴ So seldom were inhabitants of any colony interested in their own defence that it was felt any offer of service should be accepted. Therefore, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies ordered Bannerman to change his mind, while the Board of Ordnance supplied 100 rifles "on loan" to Prince Edward Island for use by such volunteers as should agree to serve for two years and drill up to 20 days annually. The British Government was very anxious to get the few British regulars withdrawn, but it would first be glad to give a volunteer movement a chance to develop.⁵⁵

The arguments of the Lieutenant-Governor and the Legislature against the withdrawal of the British garrison could now be reduced to the single one of reluctance to hire an adequate police force. This was something that did not yet exist anywhere in British North America; only in 1829 had a Metropolitan Police been created for London, England, while the British Army had been saddled with police duties in Ireland until the formation of the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1835. On December 1, 1853 the Secretary of State for War and the

⁵⁰ W.O.1/549, Campbell to Grey, Jan. 2, 1850.

⁵¹ W.O.1/550, Bannerman to Pakington, April 9, 1852.

⁵² W.O.1/549, Lane to Grey, Jan. 6, 1850, and minute of March 25, 1850.

⁵³ W.O.1/550, Bannerman to Pakington, April 9, 1852.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, April 23, 1852, and minute.

⁵⁵ W.O.1/550, Pakington to Bannerman, July 2, 1852.

Colonies wrote that the troops would soon be withdrawn and that an adequate police force should be formed.⁵⁶ The Assembly subsequently passed a bill to employ 14 policemen, but this measure was rejected by the Legislative Council.⁵⁷ Since the British Army needed all the troops it could muster for the Crimean War, the company of the 76th Regiment of Foot left Charlottetown without replacement late in 1854. There was an attempt to settle a number of military pensioners from the garrison of Newfoundland, at British expense and on available ordnance land, but the local Legislature refused to accept financial responsibility for their continued maintenance; so a party consisting of two sergeants, three corporals and 22 privates who reached Prince Edward Island during the early summer of 1855 had to go away again.⁵⁸

By degrees the enthusiasm of the volunteers, who had initially provided their own uniforms, declined because there was no visible need for their existence. On July 25, 1859 Lieutenant-Governor George Dundas wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, now Colonial Secretary, that the "Militia of the Colony exists only in name. Two Brass Field Guns have been permitted to remain at Charlotte-Town, and in connection with them there is a handful of irregular volunteers, which has, however, dwindled down into a number, only just Sufficient to Serve these two guns, on the occasion of firing a Salute."⁵⁹

By this time the British Government was becoming increasingly perturbed by the belligerent attitude of the Emperor Napoleon III of France and Sir William Fenwick Williams, the British Army's Lieutenant-General Commanding in North America, visited Prince Edward Island to make a plan for its defence. Williams recommended the installation of large guns for the defence of Charlottetown against enemy warships, the provision of a few gunners to man them and of a company of older soldiers to instruct local volunteers. Lieutenant-Governor Dundas was particularly interested in the last suggestion and requested permission from the Colonial Secretary to form volunteer rifle companies or clubs in emulation of the popular movement that was then sweeping Great Britain.⁶⁰ Approval was quickly given and on October 25, 1859 the first shipment of rifles arrived at Charlottetown from British Army stocks held at Quebec City.⁶¹ A total of 1,000 rifles would be provided as a gift to the Provincial Government.⁶²

By early April, 1860 there were ten "efficient companies of Volunteer Rifles" in Prince Edward Island.⁶³ On May 14 the Lieutenant-Governor

⁵⁶ W.O.1/550, Newcastle to Bannerman, Dec. 1, 1853.

⁵⁷ W.O.1551, Bannerman to Newcastle, May 9, 1854.

⁵⁸ W.O.1./551, Bannerman to Newcastle, May 9, 1854.

⁵⁹ C.O.226/91, Dundas to Newcastle, July 25, 1859.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1859.

⁶² C.O.226/96, Dundas to Newcastle, April 24, 1862.

⁶³ C.O.226/92, Lugard to Rogers, April 17, 1860.

wrote the Colonial Secretary that upwards of 1,000 young men had expressed a desire to serve in volunteer companies. In order to capitalize on this enthusiasm, which was directly related to the pending visit of the Prince of Wales to each of the separate provinces of British North America, the Lieutenant-Governor requested the services of proper drill instructors and an officer to serve as commandant. Military veterans among the island's inhabitants were mostly too old to be capable instructors and more help was needed than the recently received ten copies of "Model Rules for the Organization of Volunteer Corps" in Great Britain. His letter added that three companies might be trained as artillery, if guns could be provided for the defence of Charlottetown, Georgetown and Summerside.⁶⁴ The War Office in London refused to provide guns for a province where there were no regular troops, but the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army directed that an officer and three or four drill sergeants might be sent from Halifax if the Provincial Government would provide their pay and allowances.⁶⁵ Captain W. S. Marson of the 63rd Regiment and four non-commissioned officers who had been on similar duty in New Brunswick were selected.⁶⁶ The British Government also provided 50 sets of light cavalry accoutrements for the corps of militia cavalry scheduled to escort the Prince of Wales during his visit to Prince Edward Island.⁶⁷

Following the outbreak of the American Civil War in April, 1861, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution expressing "deep sorrow, and regret that actual hostilities have commenced between the Northern and Southern Sections of the United States of America."⁶⁸ The Trent Affair did not occasion nearly as much excitement as it did in nearby New Brunswick, which had the State of Maine on its western border, but the Lieutenant-Governor was able to report to the Colonial Secretary on April 24, 1862, that 1,643 officers and men were enrolled as volunteers, and that more could be recruited if weapons were immediately made available.⁶⁹ His Legislature had voted £266:13:4 for maintenance of the local volunteer force during 1862, but this was not enough and members of most rural corps were too poor to pay for their own uniforms and equipment. Since Prince Edward Island was the only self-governing colony without a British garrison, Dundas thought that the British Government should help out financially by paying for accoutrements and ammunition. Otherwise he was afraid that the volunteer force would "degenerate into a few isolated Corps, for want of the little assistance,

⁶⁴ C/369, Dundas to Newcastle, May 14, 1860.

⁶⁵ C/369, Military Secretary to Williams, July 21, 1860.

⁶⁶ C/369, Trollope to Dundas, Aug. 17, 1860.

⁶⁷ C.O.226/92, Dundas to Newcastle, Aug. 6, 1860.

⁶⁸ C.O.226/93, Dundas to Newcastle, May 13, 1861.

⁶⁹ C.O.226/96, Dundas to Newcastle, April 24, 1862.

which is indispensable to its welfare."⁷⁰ The Secretary of State for War accepted this argument and advised the Colonial Secretary as follows :

The insignificance of P.E.Isl. (wh. is hardly fit to be treated as a separate community) and the fact that she costs the Imp. Govt. nothing for Troops, are sufficient reasons to my mind, for recommending the War Office to comply with this application.⁷¹

The Lieutenant-Governor was able to go ahead with his plans for expansion and the volunteers were organized into a brigade of three regiments. Command of this Volunteer Brigade was given to Colonel John Hamilton Gray, a native son who had served as a cavalry officer in the British Army from 1831 to 1852 and was now a member of the Legislative Assembly. In the following year Colonel Gray also became Prime Minister of Prince Edward Island. During the summer of 1864 he was busy with preparations for the Charlottetown Conference, of which he was to serve as chairman. Farmers were finding it a short summer for harvesting and fishermen were equally busy, so only 677 volunteers bothered to devote a whole day to the annual inspection required of each unit. The Lieutenant-Governor's report to the Colonial Secretary was phrased in an apologetic tone, and he emphasized that the whole question of defence would have to be reviewed by the Provincial Legislature when the proposals for a Confederation of British North America came up for discussion.⁷² Defence was not an important local issue, as it was in Canada, however, and Confederation would be rejected until 1873.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, and minutes by Lewis and Newcastle.

⁷² C.O.226/101, Dundas to Cardwell, Jan. 7, 1865.