

THE QUEEN'S RANGERS

The following article is by Donald J. Flowers, U.E. and was written in response to a query posted on the Loyalist network.

No Loyalist corps was more celebrated than the Queen's Rangers. Colonel Robert Rogers, who commanded the famous Rogers' Rangers during the Seven Years' War, recruited the regiment in 1776 mainly in New York and Connecticut (later the Queen's Own Loyal Virginia Regiment joined the unit). In 1777, despite many casualties, the Queen's Rangers helped defeat Washington at Brandywine Creek. After Brandywine, Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe assumed command, and the regiment distinguished itself throughout the southern campaigns in 1780 and 1781.

During the battle of Brandywine, an order from Simcoe changed the course of history, when he told his soldiers not to shoot three fleeing Americans in the back. One of those Americans was George Washington, first President of the United States.

The origins of the Queen's Rangers lay in the Seven Years War (1756-1763), during which France and England fought for territories in the New World. At first, French-Canadian habitants and their Indian allies were quite effective by employing guerrilla tactics against the red-coated British regulars. To counter the French tactics, Robert Rogers raised companies for the British and trained them in woodcraft, scouting, and irregular warfare, sending them on raids along the frontiers of French Canada. The regiment was named in honour of Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III.

When the American War of Independence broke out in 1775, about 50 Loyalist regiments were raised, including Butler's Rangers, the King's Royal Regiment, and the Maryland and Pennsylvania Loyalists. Robert Rogers again raised the Queen's Rangers, this time in New York, mostly from Loyalists living in Westchester and Long Island. It first assembled on Staten Island in August 1776 and soon numbered some 300-400 hundred officers and men, organized into 11 companies of about 30 men each and including five troops of cavalry. In this war Rogers was not a successful commander and was replaced with a series of other officers. The regiment suffered serious losses at Mamaroneck, Brandywine and Germantown until Simcoe was given command on 15 October 1777.

Simcoe turned the badly mauled Queen's Rangers into one of the most successful British regiments in the war. Fighting as reconnaissance and outpost troops, they were never defeated in battle. One advantage they had was the fact that they were the first regiment to wear green uniforms, as more suitable for purposes of camouflage than red. They did escort and patrol duty around Philadelphia (1777-1778), fought in the Pennsylvania campaign, served as rearguard during the British retreat to New York (1778), fought at Perth Amboy, New Jersey--where Simcoe was captured but freed in a prisoner exchange 3 months later(1779-1780, at Charlestown, South Carolina (1780), in the raid on Richmond, Virginia with Benedict Arnold and in other raids in Virginia(1780-1781), and in the Yorktown campaign (1781).

A point of pride for the regiment is that when the British finally surrendered at Yorktown in 1781, the "colours" (banner) of the Queen's Rangers were smuggled away, never to fall into enemy hands. Today those same colours are on display in Toronto in the officers' mess of the Queen's Rangers. As the finest Loyalist unit, they were awarded the title 1st American Regiment and enrolled in the British Army in

1782. In 1783, when the war was concluded by the Treaty of Versailles, the Queen's Rangers left New York for Nova Scotia, where it was disbanded. These men received free crown land in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1784.

After nearly six years of fighting, Simcoe was invalided home to Britain in 1781. His nine years as a half-pay officer were spent managing his estate, pursuing military promotion and appointments and corresponding with members of his former command about land claims and problems faced by loyalists.

Simcoe was elected to the British Parliament in 1790 but took little part in debates.

When Executive Council at Quebec made the decision to separate Quebec into Lower and Upper Canada, Under the Constitutional Act, 1791, the western portion of the Province of Quebec was established as a separate entity with its own Lieutenant-Governor and Assembly. Simcoe was appointed as the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada (1841 it became Ontario).

John Graves Simcoe was born at Cotterstock, England in 1752, the only son of Captain John and Katherine Simcoe. He was educated at Oxford and entered the army as an ensign of the 35th Regiment of Foot in 1770. (more extensive notes in my file)

The connection to the Whitlock family is through Captain John Whitlock who was a member of the Queen's Rangers and who came to Nova Scotia and later Quebec as a Loyalist following the America Revolution. Captain John's father was John Whitlock of Ridgefield, Connecticut. He was born about 1720 and it is assumed his five children were likely born in Connecticut. Captain John was born about 1749. John Sr's first wife's name is unknown but the several connections later in life to the Vanderburgh family indicate she may have been a Vanderburgh. Mrs. Whitlock died in June 1781 and John Whitlock returned to Ridgefield, Connecticut to marry as his second wife - the widow Rhoda (Hays) Jones. By this time the family lived in Lenox, Massachusetts and it is here that Captain John held land.

There are records in Quebec showing land held in trust for him by Peter Vanderburgh being sold in 1825 to enable Captain John to purchase the 'Fief Choisy' in Vaudreuil, Lower Canada (Quebec). The land in Lenox, Massachusetts was left to Captain John by his father at his death in 1808. It is assume it had been transferred to Peter Vanderburgh at that time to prevent it from being confiscated as now belonging to an alien. The rest of Captain John's property has been confiscated in 1784.

Records show that John Whitlock was commissioned as an Ensign August 25,1776 age 26 in the Queen's Rangers, serving with Colonel Robert Rogers.

He served as Lieutenant under John Graves Simcoe, Lt. Col. Commandant with Captain Kerr's and Moncrief's Companies from December 25,1779 to August 23,1780 and was promoted to Captain August 29,1780. Captain Whitlock arrived at Parrsborough, Nova Scotia on May 11,1784 with his wife, two children and three servants. He petitioned for 700 acres of Crown Land.

He retired from service at half pension. Captain John Whitlock died July 7,1832 at Mission, Coteau-du-lac, near Montreal, Quebec. His descendants lived on in Quebec and while we have not traced any living members, the Whitlock Golf and Country Club at Hudson Heights, Quebec is a modern day reminder of Captain John's early presence in the area.

Our thanks to Mr. Flowers for his detailed article and the insights it enables regarding Captain John Whitlock.

Sources: X5185; R123-134; R1134; R1233: National Archives of Canada, RG8, "C" Series, Volume 1863, page 5