



Official Newsletter of the Michigan Company of Military Historians & Collectors

October 8, 2012

Any officer or non-commissioned officer who shall suffer himself to be surprised.... must not expect to be forgiven. Sir James Wolfe, 1759, General Orders during the Quebec Expedition

To be defeated is pardonable, to be surprise -- never! Napoleon, *Maxims of War*, 1831

Our speaker will be Bruce McEwen, a former USN carrier XO. He will discourse on the USS *Tripoli* (LPH-10), an *Iwo Jima*-class amphibious class assault ship, and its role in the Arabian Sea Deployments (1990-1995) and Operation Desert Storm.

MEETINGS take place the second Monday of every month at the ***Riverfront Hotel Grand Rapids Riverfront*** 270 Ann St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 363-9001. Socializing begins at 6:00 (1800), dinner at 7:00 (1900), business meeting 7:15 (1915), and program at 8:00 (2000).

Company Notes

GENERAL STAFF
OFFICERS OF THE COMPANY
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Executive Officer - James Henningsen
Adjutant - Richard O'Beshaw
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Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors

- ◆ Gary and Sheryl Zandstra were accepted into the Company as member and associate member, respectively, at our September 10th meeting.
- ◆ There will be a Silent Auction at our December 10th meeting. Bring in any unwanted militaria, books and artifacts for the benefit of the Company.
- ◆ Notice of proposed Change to **General Regulations, III Membership, Section 1 Admission to Membership, b.** to read "Voting on a candidate's membership request shall be by voice vote (instead of secret ballot) unless any member objects privately to any officer prior to the vote whereupon the ballot will be secret."
- ◆ **Dues \$40**, payable 12/1/12 to 2/28/13 **Dues \$40**

*The editorial opinions and articles in The Cannon Report do not represent any official position of the Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors (MCMH&C) only the opinions of the editor. The MCMH&C is a non-partisan, non-ideological association. All members are welcome to submit material, letters, "for the good of the company items", etc. Direct inquiries or comments to kuziaks@me.com



You are cordially invited to attend the 2012 Open Mess of the Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors. Join us for a unique social evening patterned after a traditional British regimental "Ladies Dining-In-Night," with a bit of ceremony, a piper and a round of toasts, along with a great dinner, good company and an entertaining guest speaker.

- THE DATE:** Saturday, November 10, 2012
- THE PLACE:** Boulder Creek Golf Club
5750 Brewer NE
Belmont, Michigan 49306
(616)363-1330
- THE TIME:** Cocktails at 6:00 PM
Dinner at 7:00 PM
- THE PIPER:** Rev. Thomas Bradley
- THE DRESS:** Gentlemen: Suit or Jacket
Ladies: Semi-Formal Attire
- THE SPEAKER:** **Benjamin Busch, US Marine Corps, 4th LARB, Iraq 2003-5**

The United States is currently embroiled in the longest war in its history, namely the war against Islamic terrorism. Our 2010 Open Mess Speaker, Chuck Pfarrer, described his experiences from the unconventional warfare standpoint. This year's speaker will tell us about his conventional combat experiences in Iraq. Benjamin Busch is an actor (*The West Wing*, *The Wire*, *Generation Kill*, etc), photographer, film maker, and former US Marine Corps officer who served in the 4th Light Armored Recon Battalion of the USMC in Iraq. He is also author of the critically acclaimed war memoir, *Dust to Dust*. His publisher described *Dust to Dust*:

"In elemental themed chapters-water, metal, bone, blood-Busch weaves together a vivid record of a pastoral childhood in rural New York; Marine training.....and deployment during the worst of the war in Iraq, as seen firsthand.....Most of all, he brings enormous emotional power to his reflections on mortality: in a helicopter going down; wounded by shrapnel in Ramadi; dealing with the sudden death of friends in combat and of parents back home. *Dust to Dust* is an unforgettable meditation on life and loss, and how the curious children we were remain alive in us all".

High praise indeed and why it is no surprise to that he has been compared to the Great War writer and poet Edmund Blunden. November 10 is the birthday of the US Marine Corps. Please join us in hearing from this Marine. Copies of *Dust to Dust* will be on hand for sale and autographing. *Semper Fidelis*.

2012 OPEN MESS RESERVATION FORM

THE COST: \$50.00 per person for reservation with payment received by Monday, Nov. 5.
Thereafter, it is \$ 60.00 per person. We do NOT cash the checks until after the event!

THE MENU: Boulder Creek Combo:
6 ounce prime rib and 4 ounce herb seasoned grilled boneless chicken breast served with baked potato, salad and vegetable followed by dessert.

YES, I will be there. Enclosed is my payment of \$ _____ for _____ places. I will be accompanied by the following persons listed below. Please **PRINT** their names. This **MUST** be filled out.

Sorry, I cannot attend this year.

Please mail this completed form with check made out to MCMHC and send to:

**Mr. Jay Stone
7170 Belmont Ave NE
Belmont, Michigan 49306**

If you have any questions, please call Don Hill at (616) 361-1628 or Jay Stone at (616) 866-9047 or Mike Krushinsky at (616) 677-1785. Feel free to visit the MCMHC homepage at: www.thecannonreport.org.

See you there!

The Battle of Plattsburgh September 6-11, 1814

To better appreciate this most important battle of the 1812 War some historical and geographical background information may prove helpful. Stretching from Montreal, Canada to Mobile, Alabama there once existed a series of interconnected footpaths used by Native Americans which historians have labeled the Great Indian Warpath. It was a network of routes with many branches that enabled the various tribes to trade and wage war with each other for much of the second millennium (1000-1850 AD). The northern portion, dubbed the Seneca Trail by some, was approximately 330 miles long, and extended from the St. Lawrence River near Montreal to the terminus of the Hudson River near present day New York City before continuing southwest through Pennsylvania. This northern portion was unique in that over 90% of its length could be traversed over water. Traveling north on the Hudson River from New York City this 136 mile upstream journey takes you to a point just north of Albany, near the site of the Saratoga Battlefield, where a short portage finds you at the southern end of Lake George. This 32 mile long lake with a width of 1-3 miles and dotted with numerous islands empties into Lake Champlain via the



La Chute River which drops 230 feet during its 3.5 mile run. At its terminus is the Fort known as Crown Point. 125 miles north at Rouses Point starts the 106 mile Richelieu River that empties into the St. Lawrence at Sorel, Quebec.

Throughout the early European settlement period the French occupied the St. Lawrence river valley while the Dutch settled the Hudson river area, soon to be deposed by the English with their ever increasing number of new arrivals. Prior to the 1700's the local tribes fought many battles in this area. With the

arrival of the Europeans the French and her indian allies engaged the British and their indian supporters. With the advent of the Revolutionary War the nascent American forces found themselves engaging the British with her new found indian allies and another

chapter of lake warfare began. But that war's conclusion did not end the conflicts in this vital area. It still served as a gateway into the heart of Canada and also into the northern states. The British saw it as a way to divide the country and possibly have a separate peace with the New England states (who were already doing a booming trade with the enemy forces in 1812). The Americans saw it as another opportunity to gain control of Canada and enlarge her presence in North America. With Perry's victory in Lake Erie the previous year, the British were forced reevaluate her tactics.

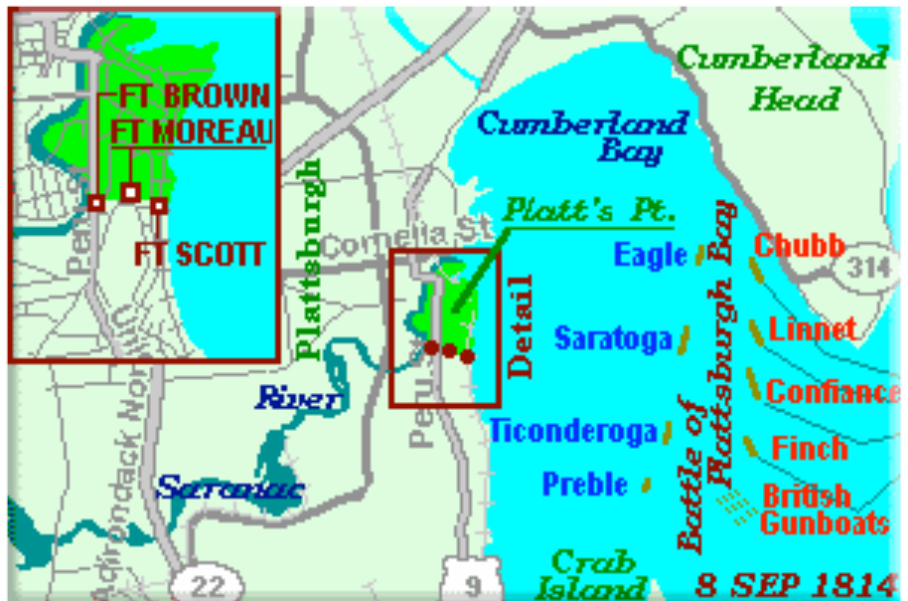
The abdication of Napoleon I and the apparent end of the [Napoleonic Wars](#) in April 1814, made available a large number of British troops to serve against the United States. In an effort to break the deadlock in North America, around 16,000 men were dispatched to Canada to aid in an offensive against American forces. These came under the command of Lieutenant General Sir George Prévost, the Commander-in-Chief in Canada and Governor General of the Canadas. Though London preferred an attack on Lake Ontario, the naval and logistical situation led Prévost to advance down Lake Champlain.

As in previous conflicts, the [French & Indian War](#) and [American Revolution](#), land operations around Lake Champlain required control of the water for success. Having lost control of the lake to English Commander Daniel Pring in June 1813, Master Commandant Thomas MacDonough embarked on a naval building program at Otter Creek, VT. This yard produced the corvette *USS Saratoga* (26 guns), the schooner *USS Ticonderoga* (14), and several gunboats by late spring 1814. Along with the sloop *USS Preble* (7), MacDonough used these vessels to reassert American dominance on Lake Champlain.

To counter MacDonough's new vessels, the British began construction of the frigate *HMS Confiance* (36) at Ile aux Noix. In August, Major General George Izard, the senior American commander in the region, received orders from Washington, DC to take the bulk of his forces to reinforce Sackets Harbor, NY on Lake Ontario. With Izard's departure, the land defense of Lake Champlain fell to Brigadier General Alexander Macomb and a mixed force of around 3,400 regulars and militia. Operating on the west shore of the lake, Macomb's small army occupied a fortified ridge along the Saranac River just south of Plattsburgh, NY.

Eager to begin the campaign south before the weather turned, Prévost became increasingly frustrated with Pring's replacement, Captain George Downie, over construction issues on *Confiance*. As Prévost chafed over the delays, MacDonough added the brig *USS Eagle* (20) to his squadron. On August 31, Prévost's army of around 11,000 men began moving south. To slow the British advance, Macomb sent a small force forward to block roads and destroy bridges. These efforts failed to hinder the British and they arrived in Plattsburgh on September 6. The next day minor British attacks were turned back by Macomb's men. Despite the massive numerical advantage enjoyed by

the British, they were hampered by friction in their command structure as the veterans of the [Duke of Wellington's](#) campaigns were frustrated by the cautiousness and unpreparedness of Prévost. Scouting west, the British located a ford across the Saranac that would allow them to assault the left flank of the American line. Intending to attack on September 10, Prévost desired to make a feint against Macomb's front while striking his flank. These efforts were to coincide with Downie attacking MacDonough on the lake.



Possessing fewer long guns than Downie, MacDonough assumed a position in Plattsburgh Bay where he believed his heavier, but shorter range carronades would be most effective. Supported by ten small gunboats, he anchored *Eagle*, *Saratoga*, *Ticonderoga*, and *Preble* in a north-south line. In each case, two anchors were used along with spring lines to allow the vessels to turn while at anchor. Delayed by unfavorable winds, Downie was unable to attack on September 10 forcing the entire British operation to be pushed back a day. Nearing Plattsburgh, he scouted the American squadron on the morning of September 11.

Rounding Cumberland Head at 9:00 AM, Downie's fleet consisted of *HMS Confiance*, the brig *HMS Linnet* (16), the sloops *HMS Chubb* (11) and *HMS Finch*, and twelve gunboats. Entering the bay, Downie initially desired to place *Confiance* across the head of the American line, but variable winds prevented this and he instead assumed a position opposite *Saratoga*. As the two flagships began battering each other, Pring succeeded in crossing in front of *Eagle* with *Linnet* while *Chubb* was quickly disabled and captured. *Finch* attempted to assume a position across the tail of MacDonough's line but drifted south and grounded on Crab Island.

While *Confiance's* initial broadside did heavy damage to *Saratoga*, the two ships continued to trade blows with Downie being struck down. To the north, Pring began pounding *Eagle* with the American brig unable to turn to counter. At the opposite end of the line, *Preble* was forced from the fight by Downie's gunboats. These were finally checked by determined fire from *Ticonderoga*. Under heavy fire, *Eagle* cut its anchor lines and began to drift down the American line allowing *HMS Linnet* to rake the *Saratoga*. With most of his starboard guns out of action, MacDonough used his spring lines to turn his flagship.

Bringing his undamaged portside guns to bear, he opened fire on *Confiance*. The survivors aboard the British flagship attempted a similar turn but became stuck with the

frigate's undefended stern presented to *Saratoga*. Unable to resist, *Confiance* struck its colors. Again pivoting, MacDonough brought *Saratoga* to bear on *Linnet*. With his ship outmatched and seeing that resistance was futile, Pring also surrendered. As at the [Battle of Lake Erie](#) a year before, the US Navy had succeeded in capturing an entire British squadron.

Beginning around 10:00 AM, the British army's feint against the Saranac bridges on Macomb's front was easily repulsed by the American defenders. To the west, Major General Frederick Brisbane's brigade missed the ford and was forced to backtrack. Learning of Downie's defeat, Prévost decided that any victory would be meaningless as American control of the lake would prevent him from being able to resupply his army. Though late, Robinson's men went into action and were having success when they received orders from Prévost to fall back. Though his commanders protested the decision, Prévost's army began retreating north to Canada that night. Once again British leadership negated the sacrifices of British soldiers and sailors. The American navy was incapable of providing adequate support to the American army and more intrepid leadership of the part of the British could have forced a stalemate at worse.

In the fighting at Plattsburgh, American forces sustained 104 killed and 116 wounded. British losses totaled 168 killed, 220 wounded, and 317 captured. In addition, MacDonough's squadron captured *Confiance*, *Linnet*, *Chubb*, and *Finch*. For his failure and due to complaints from his subordinates, Prévost was relieved of command and recalled to Britain. The American victory at Plattsburgh along with the successful [Defense of Fort McHenry](#), aided American peace negotiators at Ghent, Belgium who were attempting to end the war on a favorable note. The two victories helped offset the defeat at [Bladensburg](#) and subsequent Burning of Washington the previous month. In recognition of his efforts, MacDonough was promoted to captain and received a Congressional gold medal.

To get a good understanding of the horrific conditions experienced during this battle, watch a live fire demonstration using a replica of the brig USS Niagara and an authentic cannon showing the devastation caused by cannonballs punching into a ship. Using dummies you can visualize the horrific carnage sustained in close quarter naval battles. Courtesy of [YouTube](#) (USS Niagara Live Fire Demonstration) and <http://www.brigniagara.org/>

For further reading I highly recommend Eliot A. Cohen, PhD. author of an outstanding historical text [Conquered Into Liberty](#), describing two centuries of battles along the Great Warpath and how it influenced the American way of war.

During the next two years our Canadian neighbors will be commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the 1812 War with numerous reenactments at the various sites involved. The high school students in Ontario will be given in-depth instruction of their province's involvement while their American contemporaries will be, for the most part, kept ignorant of this conflict. The American side will have their share of reenactments and will expend a great deal of effort to inform the public. Venues along the Great Warpath from Sorel, Quebec to the Saratoga Battle site will be available for inspection. You can actually walk portions of the route used by the various armies during many of the conflicts.

Van T. Barfoot 1919-2012

Col. Van T. Barfoot, a Medal of Honor recipient, passed away recently. He gained notoriety for a 2009 flag controversy from his Henrico County community's homeowner association.

In a five-paragraph letter to Barfoot he was ordered to remove a flagpole from his yard. The decorated veteran of three wars, then 90 years old, raised the American flag every morning on the pole, then lowered and folded the flag at dusk each day in a three-corner military fashion.

In a priority mail letter, the Coates & Davenport law firm in Richmond ordered Barfoot to remove the pole or face "legal action being brought to enforce the Covenants and Restrictions against you." The letter stated that Barfoot would be subjected to paying all legal fees and costs in any successful legal proceeding pursued by the homeowner association's board.

Barfoot's daughter said that news reports about the association order had prompted an outpouring of sympathy and offers of help from people following her father's ordeal.

The Sussex Square Homeowners Association issued a statement reiterating its position that Barfoot directly violated the association board's denial of his request to erect a flagpole. "This is not about the American flag. This about a flagpole," the statement read.

Barfoot lives in the Sussex Square community in far western Henrico; its board of directors rejected a plea from Barfoot to approve the pole, disallowing the fixture on aesthetic grounds.

There is no provision in the community's rules expressly forbidding flagpoles, Barfoot's daughter said. But she said the board ruled against her father's fixture and ordered it removed, deciding that free-standing flag poles are not aesthetically appropriate. Short flag stands attached to porches dot the community. "Dad sort of felt like this is the end," said Margaret Nicholls, Barfoot's daughter, who lived a few doors away. But she said that she and her husband had attempted to generate support for her father's cause, a flag-raising rite that he has undertaken for most of his life.

Barfoot received the Medal of Honor on the battlefield during World War II in Italy and fought as well in the Korean and Vietnam wars. A portion of a highway in rural Mississippi, his native state, was named in his honor this fall. A building at McGuire Veterans Hospital in Richmond also carries his name.

Barfoot began regularly flying the flag on Veteran's Day despite the Sussex Square board's decision. He said that not flying the flag would be a sacrilege to him. "There's never been a day in my life or a place I've lived in my life that you couldn't fly the American flag," he said. The association eventually dropped its request and the legal controversy ended; however, there are still a number of Barfoot critics who felt that he took unfair advantage of his MOH in circumventing the legal covenant he voluntarily entered when he became a member of the association. The most common retorts reflected comments made by Vietnam War advocates 40 years ago: "Sussex Homeowners Association, Love it or Leave"; "If you can't follow the rules, live somewhere else" and other like comments.

Although the detractors refused to publicly state their feelings, board minutes revealed that a number of members wished to carry the lawsuit to its conclusion. Outside popular opinion finally caused the board to relent but the Law and Order Contingent is still intact and the flag pole provision remains unchanged.



Medal of Honor citation

Second Lieutenant Barfoot's official Medal of Honor citation reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty on 23 May 1944, near Carano, Italy. With his platoon heavily engaged during an assault against forces well entrenched on commanding ground, 2d Lt. Barfoot (then Tech. Sgt.) moved off alone upon the enemy left flank. He crawled to the proximity of 1 machinegun nest and made a direct hit on it with a [hand grenade](#), killing 2 and wounding 3 Germans. He continued along the German defense line to another machinegun emplacement, and with his Thompson Submachine gun killed 2 and captured 3 soldiers. Members of another enemy machinegun crew then abandoned their position and gave themselves up to Sgt. Barfoot. Leaving the prisoners for his support squad to pick up, he proceeded to mop up positions in the immediate area, capturing more prisoners and bringing his total count to 17. Later that day, after he had reorganized his men and consolidated the newly captured ground, the enemy launched a fierce armored counterattack directly at his platoon positions. Securing a bazooka, Sgt. Barfoot took up an exposed position directly in front of 3 advancing [Mark VI](#) tanks. From a distance of 75 yards his first shot destroyed the [track](#) of the leading tank, effectively disabling it, while the other 2 changed direction toward the flank. As the crew of the disabled tank dismounted, Sgt. Barfoot killed 3 of them with his tommygun. He continued onward into enemy terrain and destroyed a recently abandoned German fieldpiece with a demolition charge placed in the [breach](#). While returning to his platoon position, Sgt. Barfoot, though greatly fatigued by his Herculean efforts, assisted 2 of his seriously wounded men 1,700 yards to a position of safety. Sgt. Barfoot's extraordinary heroism, demonstration of magnificent valor, and aggressive determination in the face of pointblank fire are a perpetual inspiration to his fellow soldiers.

America's drone warfare

We imagine that drones fly to a target, launch their deadly missiles with surgical precision and return to a U.S. base hundreds or thousands of miles away. But drones are a constant presence in the skies above the North Waziristan tribal area in Pakistan, with as many as six hovering over villages at any one time. People hear them day and night. They are an inescapable presence, the looming specter of death from above. And that presence is steadily destroying a community twice the size of Rhode Island. Parents are afraid to send their children to school. Women are afraid to meet in markets. Families are afraid to gather at funerals for people wrongly killed in earlier strikes. Drivers are afraid to deliver food from other parts of the country.

The routines of daily life have been ripped to shreds. Indisputably innocent people cower in their homes, afraid to assemble on the streets. "Double taps," or secondary strikes on the same target, have stopped residents from aiding those who have been injured. A leading humanitarian agency now delays assistance by an astonishing six hours.

What makes this situation even worse is that no one can tell people in these communities what they can do to make themselves safe. No one knows who is on the American kill list, no one knows how they got there and no one knows what they can do to get themselves off. It's all terrifyingly random. Suddenly, and without warning, a missile launches and obliterates everyone within a 16-yard radius.

Naturally, we claim it strikes only militants. But if we have learned anything since [9/11](#), it is that we must all read the fine print. What people do not appreciate is that we define militants as all military-age males, typically those between 18 and 65. In addition, because the U.S. generally does not release the names of people who have been killed, we cannot know whether the victims were actually militants or were deemed militants simply because Washington says they were.

Indeed, the entire process is riddled with the same sort of flaws that beset the detention regime at the military prison in [Guantanamo Bay](#), Cuba. In Afghanistan, the Bush administration paid enormous bounties in an effort to get information on the ground. In areas rife with tribal and familial rivalries, the result was predictable: Hundreds of innocent people were wrongly fingered as Taliban or Al Qaeda, many of whom spent years at Guantanamo or other American prisons overseas.

Now the United States is offering similar incentives to people in North Waziristan who promise to identify militants. The alleged militants' homes are tagged by GPS trackers and later, when the informant is at a safe distance, blown to smithereens. And because no one knows who the informants are, people are reluctant to invite neighbors into their homes. The entire community withdraws from the public square, afraid to venture out but equally afraid to bring the outside in.

This is what it means to live under drones. It has turned North Waziristan into the world's largest prison, a massive occupied zone. A humanitarian worker who was in New York on 9/11 and is now working in North Waziristan told us that the atmosphere in the two places feels very much the same, a constant sense of terror with no boundaries.

To be continued...