

# The Second War of Independence:

## Geneva and the War of 1812

Though the American Revolution ended in 1783, tensions remained between the United States and England. By 1812 England was imposing trade restrictions, seizing British-born American sailors from merchant ships to serve in their navy, and supporting Native Americans in their efforts to stop American expansion. These actions ultimately led to another war.

While less known than other conflicts, the War of 1812 (1812-1815) was fought primarily along the United States coastline and major battles were fought within a hundred miles of Geneva. The American Revolution won our freedom from England, the War of 1812 secured it.



In 1812, the United States was east of the Mississippi River, and most of the states either fronted the Atlantic Ocean or the Canadian border. Through exposure and trade, our country was still both vulnerable and connected to Great Britain.



The September 1814 bombardment of Fort William McHenry in Baltimore inspired the writing of The Star-Spangled Banner.

A peace treaty was signed on December 24, 1814, but news of the treaty would not reach the United States until mid-February 1815. The Battle of New Orleans (January 8, 1815) was the final major battle of the war.



# The Empire State at War: New York and the War of 1812

**TO THE ELECTORS  
OF THE  
WESTERN DISTRICT.**

A CRISIS has arrived in the affairs of our Country, by which the comparative merits of Federal policy on the one hand, and of Democratic policy on the other, are now brought to the test of actual experiment.

The object of good government is to render the people happy and secure in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property. "By their fruits shall ye know them," is the maxim of unerring wisdom.

Federalists formed the constitution of the U. States, and thereby rescued our country from the impending horrors of civil war; established public credit, and confirmed the Union of the States.

Federalists directed the affairs of the nation for the first twelve years; and we now ask you calmly and dispassionately to review their conduct during that period.—Was not our country then free, happy and prosperous beyond any example in the history of nations? Commerce and agriculture then indeed were "handmaids;" commerce enriched the merchant and the farmer, and the government cherished and protected both.

Federalists built a navy of frigates, and employed them successfully in defending our rights upon the ocean.

On the 4th day of March 1801, the reign of Democracy began; our finances were then perfectly arranged: our treasury was abundant: our commerce pervaded every sea; and brought home wealth from every quarter of the globe. We were at peace with all the world. Ours was the favorite abode of civil liberty; and the character of our government was high and honorable among the nations of the earth. Mr. Jefferson himself was then constrained to acknowledge that "our republic was in the full tide of successful experiment."

*The Geneva Gazette.*  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 1813.

Mr. JAMES BOGERT,  
SIR,—During the late alarm occasioned by the attack made at Sodus by the British fleet, a report has been circulated, that the provisions purchased by the contractors for the army and stored at that place, were my property and conveyed there for the purpose of supplying the enemy.

To undeceive the public and put a stop to this false and malicious report, I will thank you to publish this letter, with Mr. Merrill's certificate: and if any persons shall attempt to injure my reputation hereafter by spreading this infamous story, I shall give them an opportunity to prove the truth of it in a court of justice.

I am, sir, your obed't serv't,  
SAMUEL COLT.

Geneva, 28th June, 1813.

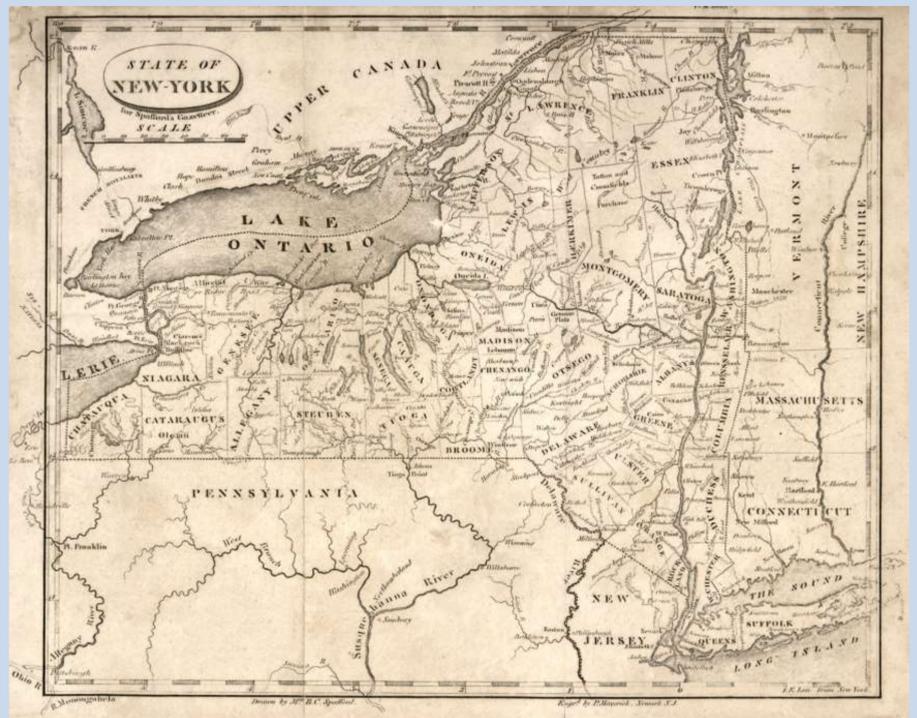
I do hereby certify, that the pork, flour and whiskey, which has been forwarded to my care during the last winter and spring, by Mr. Samuel Colt, of Geneva, amounted to about 950 barrels, and was received by me either for Augustus Porter or Elbert Anderson, jun. for the supply of the army, and held subject to their order.

It is but justice to observe, that the property forwarded to me by other merchants in Geneva and its vicinity, was for the same purpose; and that I had no private property in store, except 200 barrels of flour for Lewis and Schwormsted, at Ogdensburgh, & 47 barrels for Mr. Henry Towar, of Lyons. The former parcel and about 60 barrels of public property had not been removed at the time of the attack made by the British, and was taken or destroyed by them.

NATH'L MERRILL.  
Troupville, (Sodus Bay,) }  
28th June, 1813. }

Like most wars, there were two fronts: political and military. New Yorkers were bitterly divided over the war and no other state would be as politically divided as New York. The division between the ruling Republicans and the anti-war Federalists spilled into public meetings and newspapers in editorials with accusations of Federalists aiding the enemy.

Much of New York's involvement in the war was along its border with Canada. Although less inhabited than the southeastern part of the state, New York's northern border was strategically important. Points of conflict included the Niagara River in the west (Fort Niagara), Oswego and Sacketts Harbor along the eastern end of Lake Ontario, and Plattsburgh and Lake Champlain in the northeast.

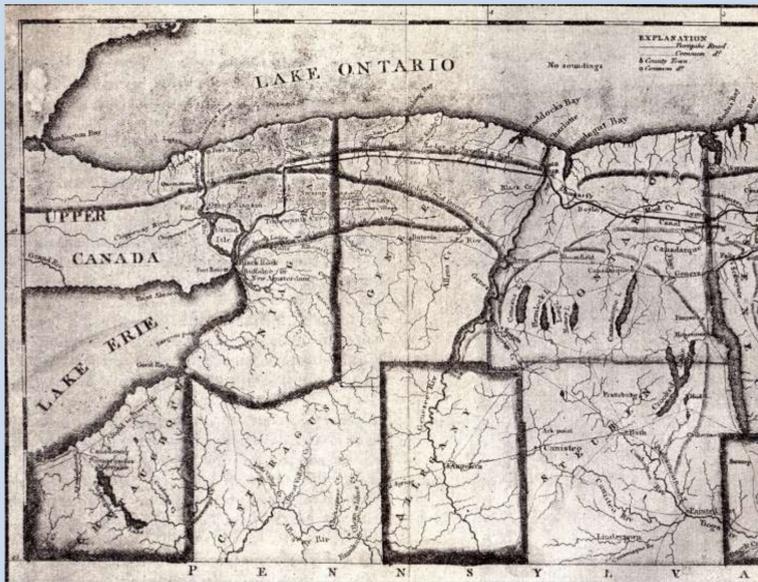


In May 1814, British ships landed off Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario and captured 2,400 barrels of supplies and several schooners.



In September 1814, soldiers and sailors stopped the British at the Battle of Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain; it was the last British invasion of the war in the northeastern states.

## Too Close for Comfort



Genevans had reasons to feel uneasy about a war with England. Buffalo, the nearest land border, was only 100 miles away, and Lake Ontario was 30 miles away. The remaining Native American nations in New York had moved to the western part of the state, which put them closer to Canada and British influence. People feared a repeat of Indian attacks that had occurred during the American Revolution.

There were few east-west roads at the time of the war, partly due to the many hills, streams, and ridges in western New York.

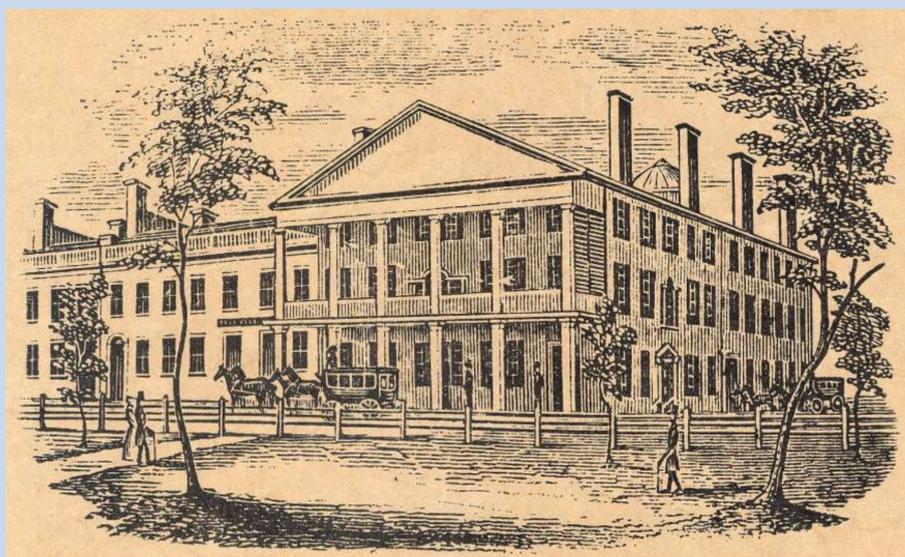
In 1811, Canandaigua and Batavia were made depositories for military stores, supplies, ammunition and men. They became gathering points for militia units before they went to the Niagara frontier. When the British burned the village of Black Rock (near Buffalo) in late December 1813 (shown right), its citizens fled east to seek refuge in these villages.



This 1807 sketch by the Baroness Hyde de Neuville shows Geneva as a small but well-established village with two churches, schools, a library, and numerous stores.



Batavia was developed by the Holland Land Company; this is an artist's rendering of how farmsteads looked around the time of the war.

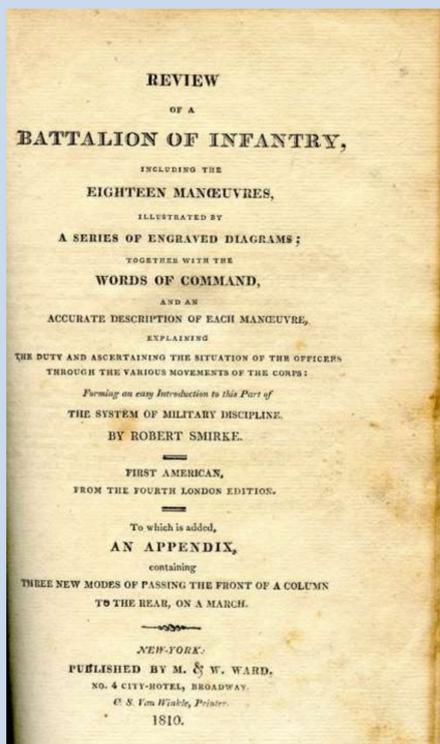


The main road across New York State, from Utica to Buffalo, ran through Geneva, bringing many travelers to town. The hotel on the village square (now Pulteney Park) served as stagecoach stop and lodging for overnight guests.

# “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State”: Militia and the War of 1812

The War of 1812 was the first test of the militia system against a foreign enemy. Opposed to a strong standing army, some framers of the Constitution preferred a citizens’ militia controlled by the states. Congress received the power to arm and call out the militia for national defense while the states were responsible for training and the appointment of officers.

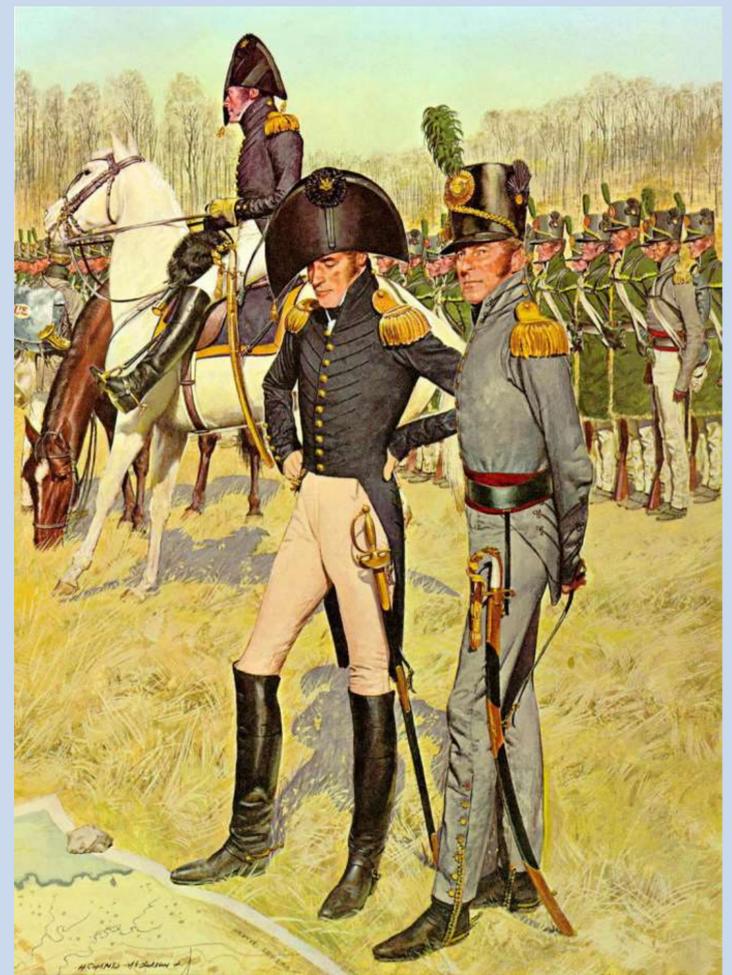
In practice, neither the states nor Congress wanted to take charge, and most men of age did not want to fight. Regular militia days, for military drill and inspection, often became social holidays. State and national governments came up with reasons they could not or would not support militias with arms and supplies so they would be ready for battle.



With liberal exceptions (clergy, teachers, firemen, all levels of government officials, Quakers, mariners, and some factory workers) all free white men between the ages of 18-45 were required to enroll in the militia.



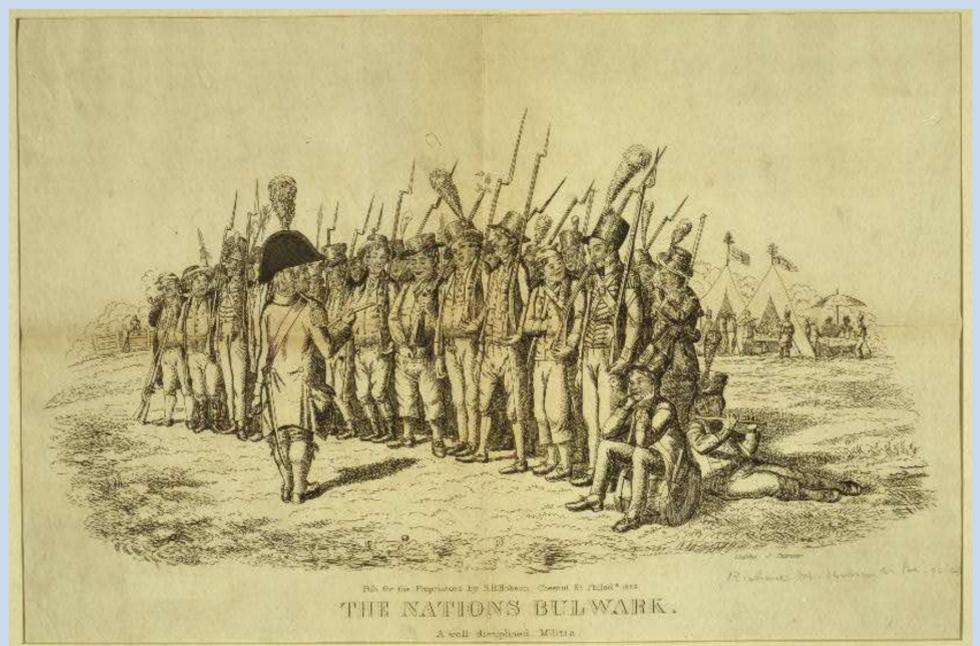
Depending on rank, officers were either elected by their soldiers or appointed by the governor. Neither method was based on military ability.



In spite of resistance to a standing army, a Regular Army was authorized up to 35,600 soldiers. However, in 1812 there were only 11,744 officers and troops.



Under the law nothing was stated about the militia invading foreign countries. At the Battle of Queenstown Heights, October 13, 1812, when New York militia refused to cross into Canada more than 1,000 American troops were captured, killed, or wounded.



This 1829 cartoon illustrates the continuing militia problem after the war: a lax attitude toward drill days, with the refreshment tents displayed in the background.

## A Commuter War: The Local Militia

“Upon the outbreak of the war, the militia kept marching to the frontier, there being no apparent lack of numbers, and all were anxious to capture Canada the next day after their arrival, but they were quite ignorant of actual war and the first touch of reality chilled them to the marrow.”

E. T. Emmons, *The Story of Geneva*

For Geneva units, the War of 1812 was a “commuter war.” Militia service was limited to three months per year, beyond which volunteers were not obligated to stay. Units would be formed and released but then general orders would be issued to raise another local unit to go to the front. Local soldiers primarily served on the Niagara Frontier, but

some were sent to villages along Lake Ontario to defend against British raids.

**D. NAGLEE,**  
HAS NOW ON HAND AT HIS  
*Hat Manufactory,*  
Nearly opposite the Hotel, Geneva,  
dozen FUR HATS, of the newest  
fashion;  
dozen WOOL HATS;  
With some Ladies' Hats, of the newest  
fashion and different colors—all of which he  
will warrant to be of a superior quality.  
Also some elegant large flax silk Cords and  
Tassels, of different colors, for Ladies'  
Hats—with a quantity of Gold Cords and  
Tassels for Ladies' or Military Hats—20  
pieces of excellent Gold Cord. The above  
articles will be sold wholesale or retail un-  
usually low for Cash, Fur, or Lamb's Wool.  
A constant supply of Hats of the newest  
fashion always on hand.  
Geneva, June 12. (80)

**BOOK-BINDING.**  
THE subscriber having established the  
BOOK-BINDING Business, in  
Number-Nine, town of Seneca, about  
half a mile east of the Widow Rice's, in-  
forms the public that he will bind Books in  
a plain and strong manner, on reasonable  
terms. Old books will be repaired or re-  
bound. Persons in and near Geneva, can  
leave their books for binding, (with writ-  
ten directions for the manner they wish  
them done,) with J. Bogert, at the *Geneva*  
*Bookstore*, to which place the same will be  
returned when bound. FONES RICE.  
Seneca, April 24, 1811. (97)

**ABRAHAM DOX,**  
HAVING taken into partnership his  
brother, GERRIT L. DOX, the  
business in future will be conducted at the  
same place, under the firm of  
**A. & G. L. DOX.**  
They have on hand a very general as-  
sortment of  
*Dry Goods, Groceries,*  
*Hardware and Crockery,*  
Which they will sell at the most reduced pri-  
ces for ready pay only.  
Geneva, March 25, 1811.

**NOTICE.**  
In consequence of the connexion formed  
with his brother, the subscriber is under  
the necessity of closing his former concerns.  
All those indebted to him are informed that  
payment must be made before the first of  
May next, as on that day all Notes and Ac-  
counts which remain unpaid, will, with-  
out discrimination, be put into the hands  
of an attorney for collection. A. DOX.

**HENRY C. JONES,**  
RESPECTFULLY informs the public,  
that he has purchased the STOCK of  
Doctor Wm. HORTSEN, and purposes car-  
rying on the  
*Apothecary Business.*  
He flatters himself, that with the assis-  
tance of Dr. H. he will be enabled to sup-  
ply the village and its environs with every  
article in the above line, all which will be  
warranted genuine, and sold on as low

*The Geneva Gazette.*  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1812.

THE SUBSCRIBER,  
HAVING been called from his business  
to the Frontiers, is desirous of having all pre-  
settled Accounts adjusted without delay. He  
therefore requests those persons indebted to  
him by Note or Book Account, to make im-  
mediate payment to Mr. G. CLARK, who  
is fully empowered to settle the same, and  
to transact business in his name, during his  
absence. All Notes and Accounts remain-  
ing unpaid on the 1st. Day of December next  
will be lodged in the hands of an Attorney  
for collection.

JAMES BOGERT.  
Geneva, 21st Oct. 1812.

*The Geneva Gazette.*  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1812.

Congress adjourned on Monday the  
inst. to the first Monday in November next.

We observe by an advertisement in a  
New-York paper, that AARON BURR has  
opened his office in that city, as Attorney  
and Counsellor at Law.

Appointments for the Seventh Regiment, in  
Third Brigade of Artillery.

Walter Grieve, of Geneva, Ontario coun-  
ty, Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant.  
Samuel Adams, of Seneca county, First  
Major.  
Thomas Mumford, of Cayuga, Second  
Major.  
Joseph H. Rees, of Geneva, Adjutant.  
William Lilly, of Geneva, Quarter-Mas-  
ter.  
William Powell, of Geneva, Pay-Master.  
Daniel Hudson, of Geneva, Surgeon.  
Jedidiah Chapman, of Geneva, Chaplain.

The Geneva Gazette, the village's one newspaper at the time, ran regular announcements of the war, ranging from officer appointments to news items. The administration of the war was not very thrilling but the newspaper was the most effective means of spreading information such as recruiting notices or bounties for soldiers who had deserted their units.

Geneva, May 18, 1812.

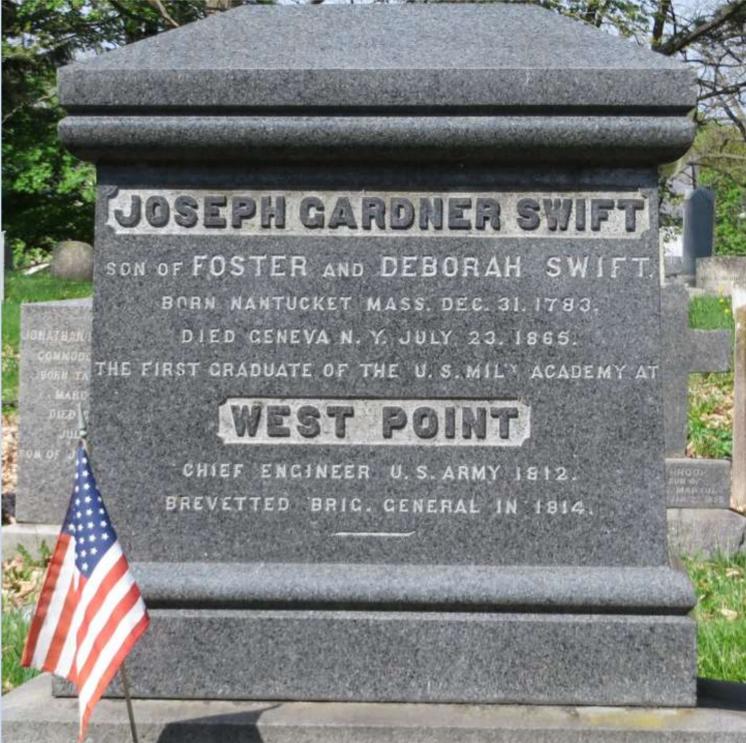
**Recruiting.**—Above 40 men have been enlisted in this village in five weeks by Capt. Dox. Lieutenant Clark has enlisted in Auburn about 30 men. These men have all been marched to Canandaigua, where they are to receive clothing and equipments; and where it is expected above 200 soldiers will be assembled in a few days.

On Monday last Capt. James Rees' com-  
pany of Artillery, of this village, marched  
for Pukeneville. Capt. Rees has the com-  
mand of the militia stationed on the lake,  
from the mouth of Genesee river to Sodus  
bay.

**DESERTED,**  
FROM the Seventh regiment of N. Y.  
S. Artillery, ALVAH DICKINSON and  
WILLIAM SCOTT, of Capt. Rees' com-  
pany; HIRAM MILLARD & EZRA PROU-  
TY, of Capt. Hart's company—the latter a  
substitute; & WILLIAM HOARD, of Capt.  
Ellicot's company. Ten Dollars will be  
paid to any person for each of the said De-  
serters, who will lodge them in any jail in  
the State of New-York, and give notice—  
or Ten Dollars for each of them, and rea-  
sonable charges paid, on delivering them to  
the commandant of the regiment.

By order of Lt. Col. W. GRIEVE,  
WM. P. BENNETT, Adjutant.  
Fort George, Nov. 11, 1813. (323)

## Local Figures

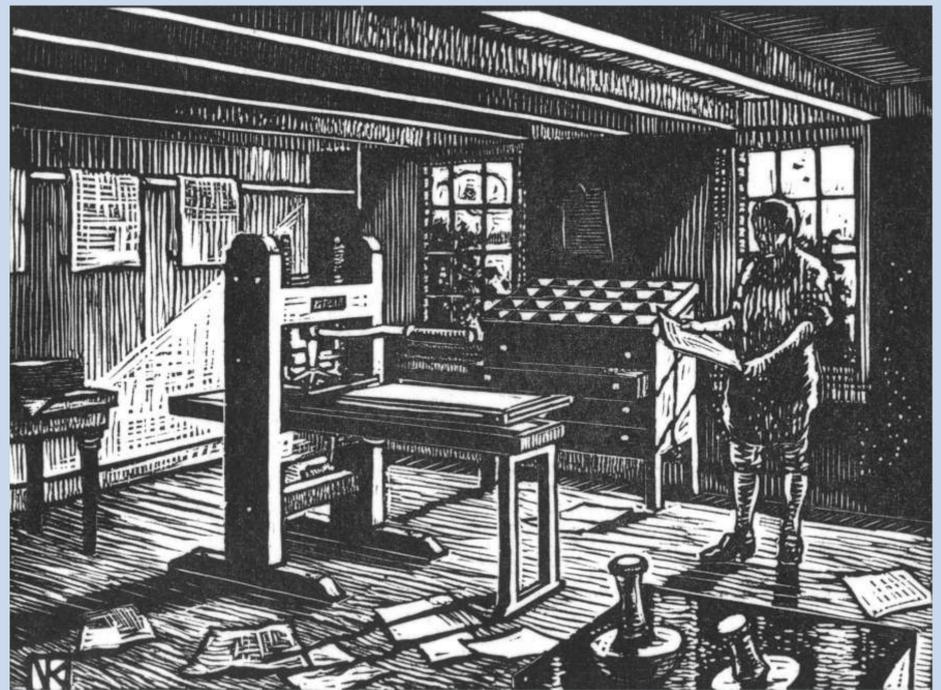


General Joseph Swift (1783—1865) was the first graduate of West Point in 1802. During the War of 1812, he designed defenses along the St. Lawrence River and the New York City harbor, and served as the chief engineer of the United States from 1812 to 1818. Swift moved to Geneva in 1829; he is buried in Washington Street Cemetery.

From 1806 to 1833 James Bogert was the printer and publisher of the Geneva Gazette. Bogert was a captain of a Geneva infantry company, and served on the Niagara frontier. After the war he continued to serve in the militia earning the rank of colonel. The Veterans Brigade of Northern New York elected him their general and he devoted much of his time to the brigade.

Before the war James Rees was first cashier for the Bank of Geneva and Sheriff of Ontario County. With the rank of Major he served as the Deputy Quartermaster of the Northern Division of the Army.

Watchmaker John Sweeney served as a lieutenant. During the Battle of Queenstown orders came for the militia to immediately cross into Canada. In the absence of the captain, Sweeney was in command of the company and without hesitation he obeyed the order. During the battle Sweeney was wounded in the knee and carried off the field. His comrades carried him home on a stretcher. Sweeney



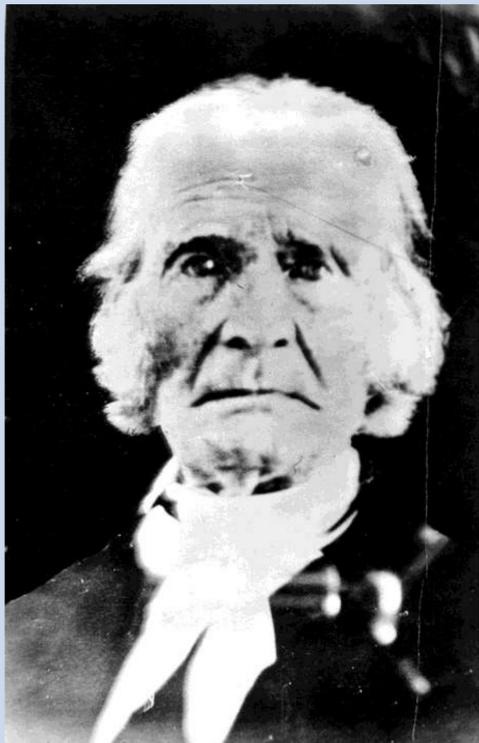
would recover from his wound but was lame for the rest of his life.

Merchant Abraham Dox commanded a volunteer company. At the Battle of Queenstown he served as an aide to General Stephen Van Rensselaer and the bearer of the General's dispatches to the headquarters of the Army in Albany. In 1813 he served as a member of the state legislature. After the war Dox would become one of the founders of Ontario Glass Factory, Seneca Lock Navigation Company, and Hobart College.



# Hometown Hero: Hugh Dobbin

## 1767-1855



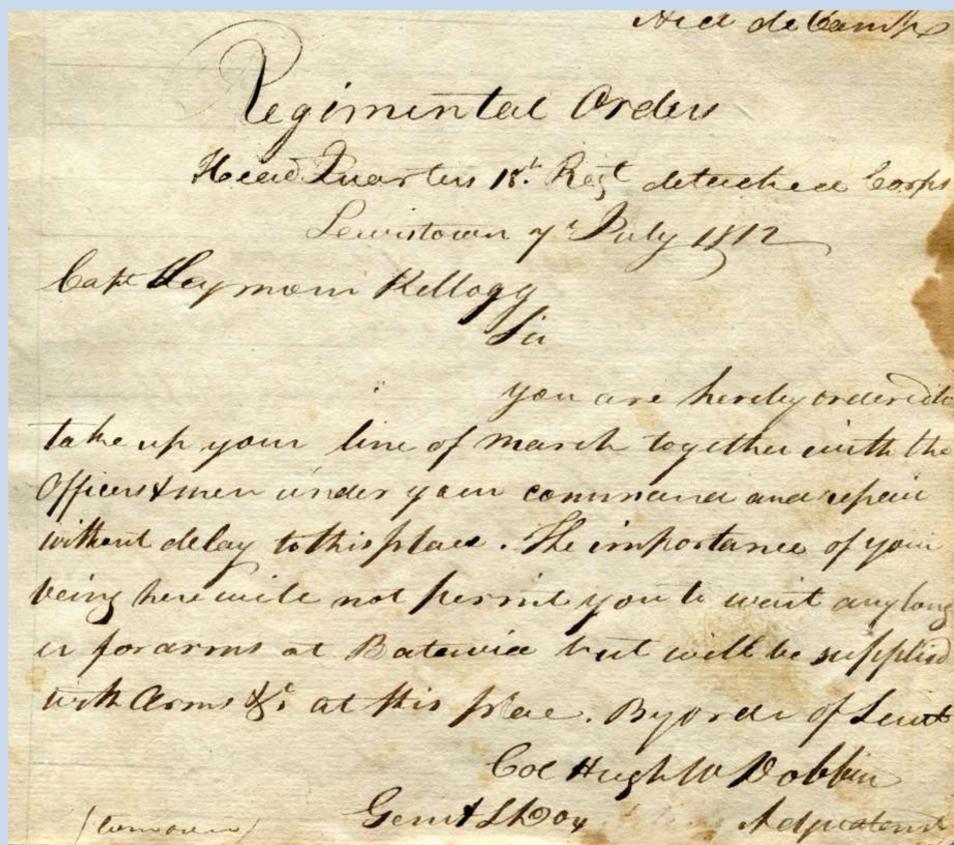
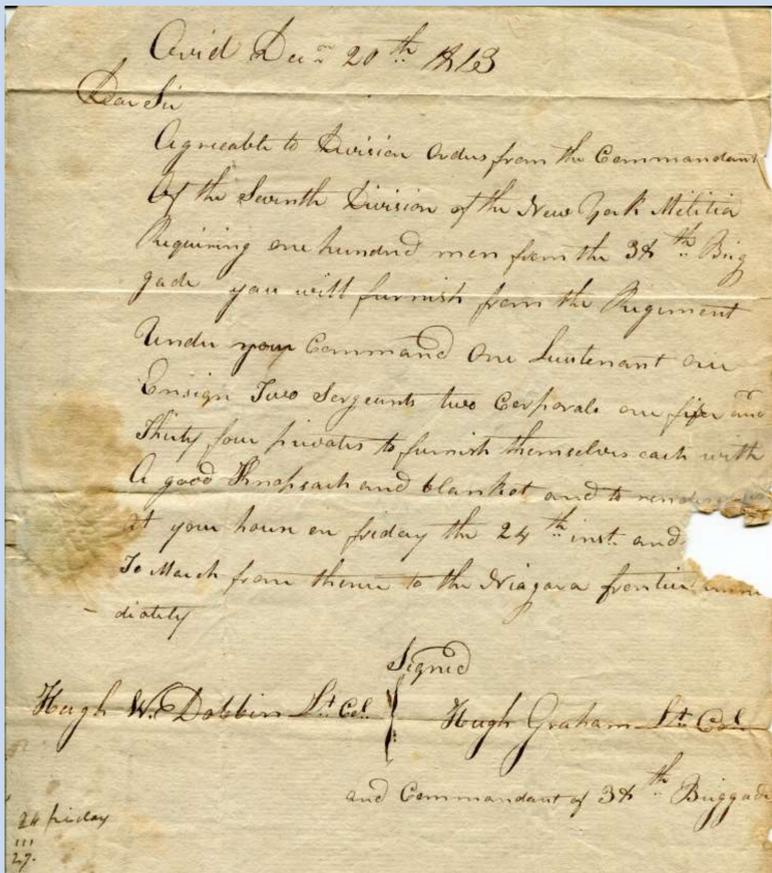
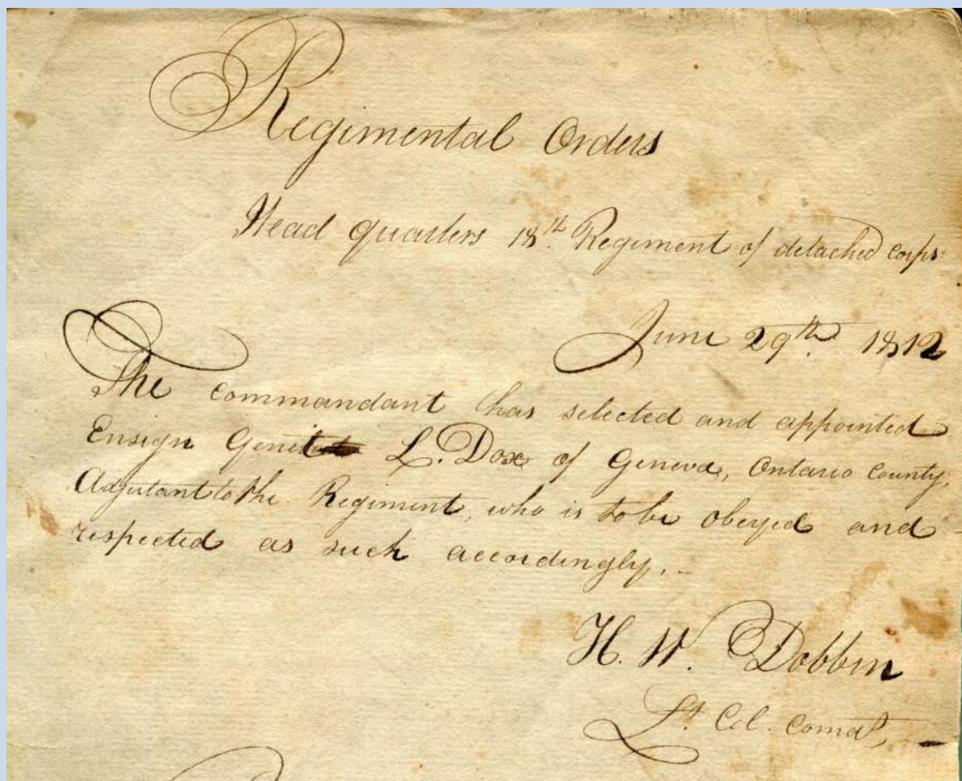
In 1797 Hugh Dobbin moved to the Town of Junius, outside Geneva, and began farming. Although they lived in Seneca County, Dobbin and his family were active in the Geneva community. He was elected to town and county offices and, as such, was a likely candidate for a militia officer.

*"[My wife] said she did not wish to detain me at home on her account...Dr. Goodwin though she was not in immediate danger. I left for the camp. About the or near the last of February [1814] I received word that Mrs. Dobbin was dangerously ill. I set out immediately and when I reached home, and entered her room I saw death was at work upon her."*

Hugh Dobbin

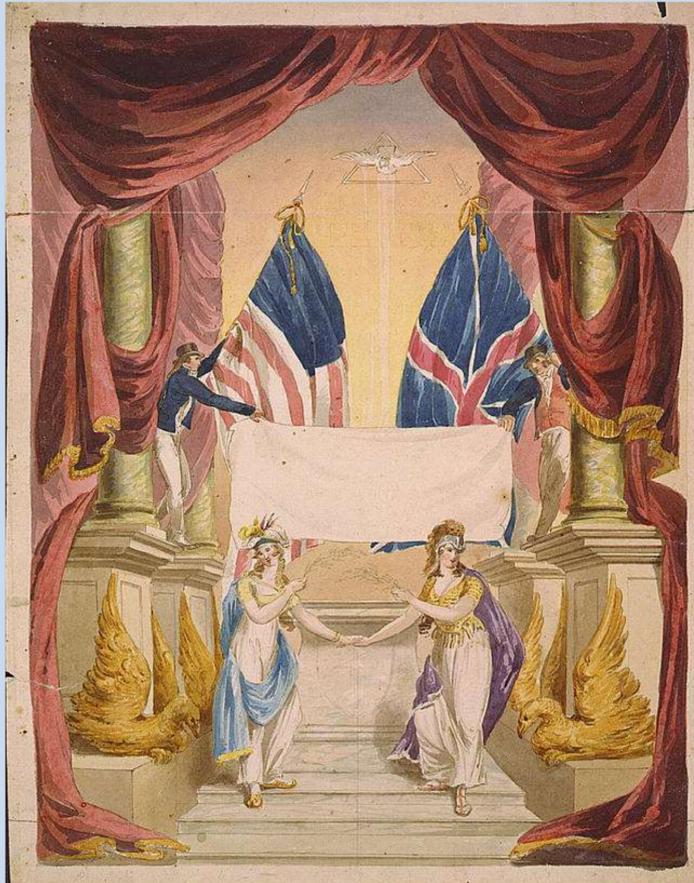
Dobbin served as a lieutenant colonel, but faced personal struggles during the war. His wife was ill and eventually died in March 1814. Though he frequently asked to be relieved of command, he was usually coerced to continue because of his position in Seneca County and ability to recruit soldiers. Between commanding his unit and checking on his family, he made numerous trips from the Niagara frontier and Batavia to Geneva. In 1815, he served on a court martial in Batavia for several months before being released from service.

While Lieutenant Colonel Dobbin led his troops into Canada and served bravely in battle, much of his time was spent writing or receiving regimental orders. The business of war was done with pen and ink, and the Geneva Historical Society is fortunate to have many of his orders, as well as handwritten accounts of his service.

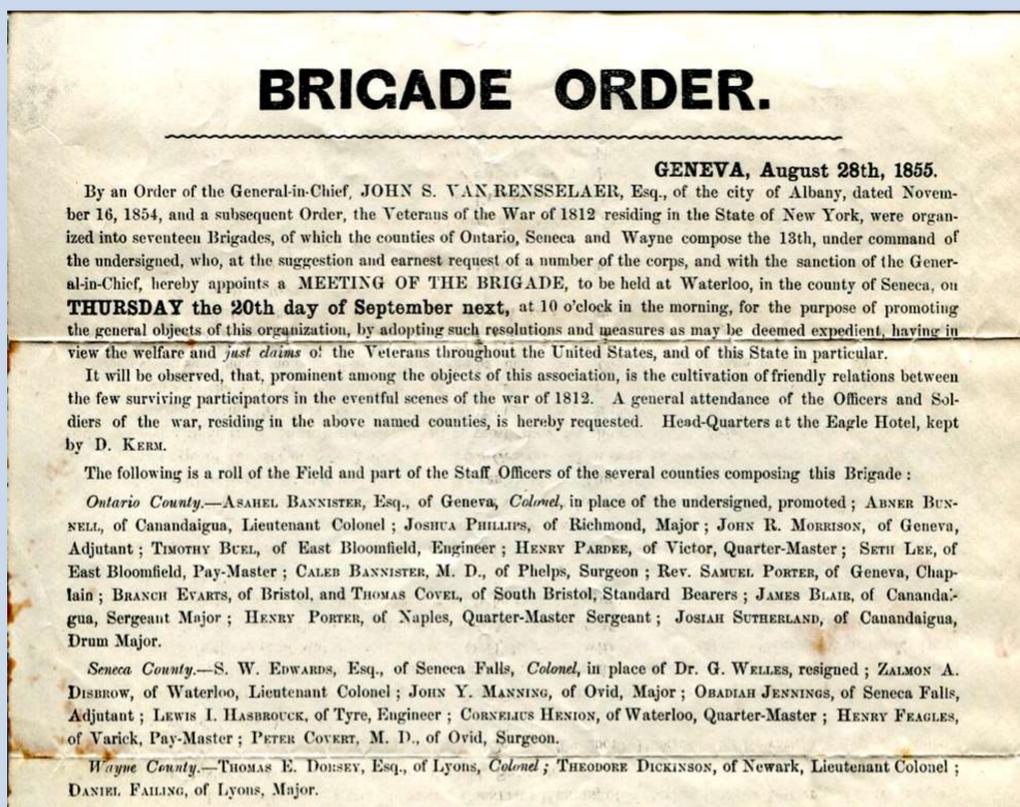


## Legacy of the War of 1812

Peace came about in early 1815 in part because Great Britain was tired of war and its merchants were losing business by not trading with the United States. Though the War of 1812 did not change any territorial boundaries, it was not considered a failure. It solidified the border between the United States and Canada. With the slow improvement of the militia and regular army, the war convinced Congress of the need for a



standing army. The United States moved from a questionable republic to a respected nation and England never again challenged the United States militarily. Native Americans, however, suffered the most from the war. Great Britain ceased its support of and trade with tribes in the United States. This paved the way for increased settlement east of the Mississippi and continued westward displacement of Native Americans.



*“It will be observed, that, prominent among the objects of this association, is the cultivation of friendly relations between the few surviving participators in the eventful scenes of the war of 1812.”*

James Bogert, General, 13th Brigade  
NY Veterans

Canada considers the War of 1812 a defining point in its history. Had the country become part of the United States, they feel their diverse identities would have been lost. The war strengthened Canada by bringing English, French, and First Nations people together to fight. National heroes (seen right, left to right) Sir Isaac Brock, Tecumseh, Laura Secord, and Charles-Michel de Salaberry emerged from the war. For the bicentennial, the Canadian government invested millions of dollars in commemorative postage stamps, coins, and programs and events.

