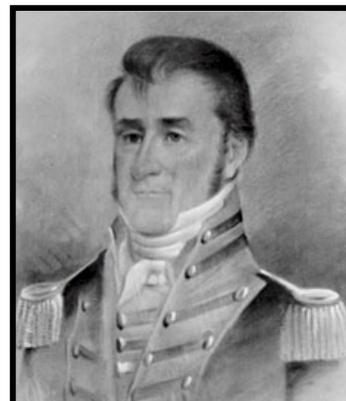


President Thomas Jefferson

Left Division's Right Hook: Leading to Chippewa in 1814

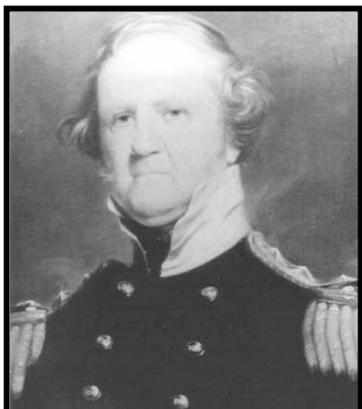
The easy takeover of Canada that former President Thomas Jefferson predicted at the beginning of the War of 1812, by “a mere matter of marching,” did not come to pass. Not only did three separate attacks into Canada fail, but Detroit and some other American territory even fell into British hands. Why?

Early in 1813, Major General Morgan Lewis complained to the Secretary of War that the troops were untrained and that the officers were nearly so. With the emphasis that today's Army places on preparation and training, it is easy to forget that it was much different in the early 19th Century. Although each regiment had a designated “principal recruiting rendezvous,” these locations were merely collection points for Soldiers and new recruits. New Soldiers rarely received any instruction before joining their units in the field. Oftentimes they arrived at the front unequipped and unprepared for immediate service. Subsequent operations revealed what even a casual observer might have predicted – the lack of adequate training greatly hindered success in the field. There were other issues, but this was significant. Regardless, after a predictably mediocre performance in 1813, the American Army stopped active campaigning along the Canadian frontier for the winter season and started planning and preparing for the following year.



Morgan Lewis

At that time, Major General Jacob Brown commanded what was known as the “Left Division” of the U.S. Army's 9th Military District. He delegated the task of getting the division ready for the upcoming campaigning season to newly-promoted Brigadier General Winfield Scott, who occupied himself with setting up a “camp of instruction” to get the soldiers ready for field operations. Camps such as this were not something new, as other officers had conducted them before, but the impact of this camp was that it directly affected the Army's chances of success on the Niagara frontier in 1814. Troops were assembled at Flint Hill near Buffalo, New York, and, on April 22, 1814, they began rigorous training.



Winfield Scott

Scott was determined that the Left Division Soldiers would become proficient at marching and countermarching, drilling, and conducting evolutions in the field. Early each morning squads of twelve to twenty men were drilled by their Sergeants, followed by Captains drilling their companies later in the morning. In the early afternoon, the whole brigade was drilled for several hours under the watchful eyes of Scott. Additional drilling occasionally took place in the evenings as well. By early June, Scott was satisfied with the division's progress and reduced drill to two hours in the morning and the afternoon. Officers and Soldiers were also given instruction in proper camp procedures, including sanitation, which cut down the cases of illness.



Jacob Brown

While the division did contain a number of raw recruits, most of those at the camp had already gained experience in the field during previous wartime operations. It should also be noted that not all Soldiers assigned to the Left Division were able to participate in training at the camp. Some companies arrived after the initial training was well underway. In fact, some came very late. For example, half of the 23rd U.S. Infantry arrived just two days prior to the division crossing into Canada, while a few units reached the front after the campaign had already begun.

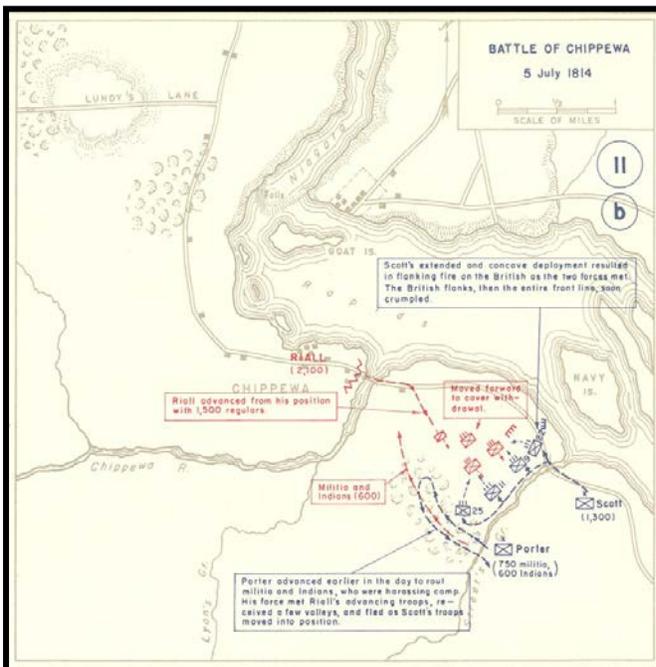


Artist's Rendering of Soldiers in Action at the Battle of Chippewa

The Left Division crossed into Canada in the early morning hours of July 3, 1814. Fort Erie was quickly taken, and on July 5 the division came head to head with British forces under the command of Major General Phineas Riall, near a town called Chippewa. The British general, who had repeatedly beaten American troops in 1813, apparently assumed that he again faced an army largely composed of unreliable militia units, possibly due to the gray uniforms many U.S. Soldiers were wearing. What he did not know was that Scott was unable to procure enough of the blue Regular Army uniforms for his men and he had to make do with what he had. Nor was Riall worried by a rumor that the Americans outnumbered the British; he supposedly stated the



Phineas Riall



Americans were untrained cowards who would turn and run when faced with British bayonets. Thinking he would win an easy victory, Riall initiated the main attack. To his amazement, American Soldiers drove his troops from the field. The performance of the U.S. Army's Left Division supposedly prompted him to exclaim, "Those are regulars, by God!" Clothes may make the man, but training, commitment, and leadership make the Soldier and unit.

As we celebrate the anniversary of the War of 1812 and the "Army Profession" this year, the work of General Scott, and leaders like him, serve as an inspiration – then and now. His role in training and leading Soldiers was remarkable. The U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA, continues that tradition, preparing

leaders to serve at the strategic level of war and in making daily contributions to the study and application of Landpower. If you would like to learn more about Scott, the War of 1812, or the history of the U.S. Army, please contact the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (www.usahec.org). We would love to support your research. One team!