

Reflections, Records and Remembrances of Rebellion Chapters in the Patriot War

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[See table of contents](#)

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Reflections, Records and Remembrances of Rebellion

Chapters in the Patriot War

by John C. Carter

Introduction:

In 1885, Canadian historian and author Charles Pelham Mulvany reflected back upon momentous events of 1837 and 1838 in Upper Canada. He wrote that; “The Mackenzie rising, in 1837, must be carefully distinguished from other movements, from the Lower Canadian insurrection, and from the filibustering raids of American ‘sympathizers’ [Patriot War] which followed.”¹ Mulvany’s specific belief and supposition were not always agreed upon by other historians of the period, nor by those writing later about these events. However, his statement is an interesting proposition for those interested in the Upper Canadian Rebellions of 1837 and 1838 to consider and to ponder.

The Ontario Historical Society

The Ontario Historical Society has a long interest in these events. Between 1905 and 1940, numerous articles about the rebellions were published in the *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*. Subsequently, *Ontario History* has also included various rebellion related articles in its volumes up to present times.

In addition, the Ontario Historical Society held a symposium in 1987, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 1837 rebellion. In 1988, the proceedings from this conference were published by the OHS. In 2009, I had the pleasure to guest edit “Consequences of Rebellious Acts.” This special themed issue of *Ontario History* featured six articles dealing with aspects of the 1837-1838 Upper Canadian rebellions. This volume became one of the most popular *OH* issues ever produced.

Some fourteen years later, I again have the honour to guest edit another rebellion themed issue of *Ontario History*. It contains ten articles about the rebellions/Patriot War, which were written by authors living in Australia, United States, and Canada. New research and interesting interpretations of varied topics related to the rebellions are included in these offerings, a truly international undertaking! These articles are presented in an approximately chronically dated order, from earliest to latest.

The Issue:

In the opening article, Chris Raible utilizes various resources to tell the story of William Alves, a participant in the

¹ See Charles Pelham Mulvany, *History of Toronto and County of York* (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1885), v. 1, p 119.



A painting of the schooner Anne firing on Amberstburg, 1838 by Peter Rindlisbacher. Courtesy of the artist.

1837 rebellion, the aftermath of his arrest, and as a prisoners' box maker.

Next, Robert Beasecker uses original documents in the form of never before published letters, to interpret the fascinating tale of W.W. Dodge. Events dealt with include his capture at the schooner *Anne* incident, his incarceration, and subsequent details of his life after escape from prison.

Then Bruce D. Aikin investigates rebellion events and topics from Niagara County, New York, in a regional study of the 1838 Patriot War. He details early episodes of these cross-border hostilities

from that vicinity, as well as personalities involved.

This piece is followed by Dr. Josh Steedman's presentation of an American perspective on the 1838 Patriot War. His thesis is illustrated through intensive research and assessment of period newspapers.

Next, Dr. Stephen Smith contributes a Canadian view of events associated with the 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion and after, in a study and review of original Patriot sponsored and supported newspapers which report these actions.

Cozy Venable Palmer and Michael

Kehoe follow up by providing a genealogical study of their relative John Berry a Patriot captured at the Battle of the Windmill. In addition, the authors identify a large number of relatives directly connected with Berry.

Then, Terrance Patterson offers a biographical account of Hiram Sharp (a relative of his wife Margaret), and he explains how Sharp was one of the few North American political prisoners to remain in Australia after his pardon.

Ian Hundey adds an investigation of various chapters in the life of James Milne Aitchison, a Patriot captured at the Battle of Windsor. Hundey utilizes and relies on a vast body of research on Aitchison that he has done over many years. The article includes material from never before published family letters, kindly provided by Angus Horne.

My concluding article presents the intriguing story of Chauncey Sheldon, a Patriot combatant who was also captured at the Battle of Windsor. It includes his

trials and tribulations as a prisoner in a penal colony, and explains the aftermath of his rebellion/incarceration experiences which he spent in Michigan.

Conclusion:

I would like to thank all the authors and eleven peer reviewers for their contributions to this volume, Dr. Tory Tronrud for his final edit and formatting, and especially to Canadian maritime artist Peter Rindlisbacher, for his kind permission to use his original painting of the schooner *Anne* on this volume's front cover. I do trust that you will value this special rebellion themed edition of *Ontario History*. It was a great opportunity and experience for me to be the guest editor of this new source of information and original research, focused on the Upper Canadian Rebellions/Patriot War. Do enjoy the read, and please email your comments, thoughts and suggestions about this issue to me, at drjohncarter@bell.net.