

# Hiram Sharp

## A Life Changed by the Battle of the Windmill

Terrance Patterson

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### Résumé de l'article

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# Hiram Sharp

## A Life Changed by the Battle of the Windmill

by Terrance Patterson

### Early Influence

**H**iram Sharp was born in about 1815 in Taunton, Massachusetts, the fourth child of eight of Philario Sharp and Rebecca, nee Richmond. Early on, the Sharp family moved to Barnard, Vermont and, finally, by 1830, to Salina in Onondaga County, New York. There, they resided near Three Rivers Point on what is today part of the Erie Canal; this is a beautiful part of the United States in the State of New York, near the present-day city of Syracuse and close to Canada's border.

Both of Hiram's grandfathers had military experiences fighting against the British; Daniel Sharp was one of the first to volunteer in June 1775 and, at Cambridge, fought to stop the British invasion that had commenced at Lexington.<sup>1</sup> He served initially as a private under Captain (Lebadish?) Ingalls. Hiram's other grandfather, Nathaniel Richmond, enlisted in June 1781 and served as a private in Captain Gifford's Company, Colonel William Turner's Massachusetts Regiment.<sup>2</sup> Both men undoubtedly

would have had some influence on the path that Hiram was to undertake.

I can imagine the stories of the past filling the young Hiram with tales of fighting for freedom against a foe that wished to deny any democratic reform. Another fact that would have undoubtedly influenced the impressionable, young mind was that Hiram's ancestor Thomas Rogers, had taken the brave move to sail out to the New World on the Mayflower in 1620. Thomas was one of the signatories to the Mayflower Compact, the first document that recognized that every Man under God was equal. Coming from such a background, it becomes understandable that given a chance, Hiram would also seek his opportunity for fame, glory, and undoubtedly wealth.

### The Revolutionary

**H**iram's chance to emulate his ancestors came with the disturbances and agitation for political reform close by in the British-held colony of Upper

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<sup>1</sup> Old Colony, Taunton Massachusetts Archives, "Daniel Sharp, Declaration of Military Service August 1832."

<sup>2</sup> Old Colony, Taunton Massachusetts Archives, "Nathaniel Richmond, Declaration of Military Service August 1832."

## *Abstract*

*Filled with a heightened sense of duty to eliminate the British from North America, Hiram Sharp, like many young Americans, joined a Hunters' Lodge and fought with them in the Battle of the Windmill at Prescott where he was captured and then deported to Van Diemen's Land. His quest unfulfilled, Sharp ultimately forged a new path in another British colony at the far ends of the earth and helped bring about the form of democracy that both Canada and Australia share and enjoy today.*

**Résumé:** *Animé d'un sens aigu du devoir pour éliminer les Britanniques d'Amérique du Nord, Hiram Sharp, comme beaucoup de jeunes Américains, a rejoint une Hunter's Lodge et s'est battu avec eux lors de The Battle of the Windmill à vent de Prescott, où il a été capturé puis déporté à Van Diemen's Land. Sa quête n'ayant pas abouti, Sharp a finalement tracé une nouvelle voie dans une autre colonie britannique au bout du monde et a contribué à l'avènement de la forme de démocratie que le Canada et l'Australie partagent et apprécient aujourd'hui.*

Canada in 1838. Filled with the many stories coming from the Canadian provinces and the heightened sense of duty amongst many young Americans to eliminate the British from the North American continent, Hiram joined one of the Hunters' Lodges. These masonic-like organizations were to become the cover for similar like-minded men who wished to free Canada in the same way that the Revolutionaries did in 1776, a totally British-free North America.

Inspired by a radical zeal to be one of those to free Canada, Hiram left his family in 1838 and travelled towards the northern frontier, seeking to join up with other members of his Hunters' Lodge. The Onondaga Hunters was the

armed force that attacked Upper Canada at Prescott in what was to become the hard-fought Battle of the Windmill.

The attack, which began on the night of 12 November and continued through to 16 November, did not go to plan. The Patriots lost much of their ammunition supplies when the *Charlotte of Oswego* became grounded in the shallows at the entrance of Oswegatchie River. The Hunters were also spotted before the planned surprise attack could take place and forced to take up a defensive position in a windmill that stood on the northern bank of the St. Lawrence River not far from their intended target, Fort Wellington. Even though the initial plan had gone astray, the Hunters still held

a couple of advantages: one, of course, was their defensive position; the walls of the windmill were strong and curved, and even the cannon balls fired by the British later in the battle found the walls to be impervious. The other advantage was that the British still used highly inaccurate and less effective muskets, whilst the Hunters were using technologically more advanced rifles. As such, the much smaller force of Americans kept the larger British force at bay.

As word of the incursion from the United States reached the authorities, more British regulars, as well as militia and gunboats, were called into service, and the Hunters knew that given time without ammunition or an increase in



*Hiram Sharp (family collection).*

leagued men, surrounded by no escape and home, the United States, just across the river on the opposite bank. As one of the patriots, Stephen Wright, later wrote, “There lay the broad, beautiful St. Lawrence, and beyond it the land of the free—how we longed to see our wounded beyond its waters.”<sup>3</sup>

### Trial and Exile

Capture by the British, followed by a trial, internment, and finally, banishment to the Australian colony of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) awaited Hiram and many of his comrades. The young man who had left home must have turned his thoughts to those close to him—his parents, brothers, and sisters—wondering if he ever would see his family again.

Upon surrendering, the Patriots prisoners were initially taken to Fort Wellington, but it was not long before they were moved to Fort Henry to be incarcerated within the stone walls of this substantial gaol to await trial and sentence: life, death, banishment? The Patriots could only dwell on their misfortune.

The imprisoned Americans created an interesting problem for the authorities, as they had never sworn allegiance to the Crown; they could not be placed on trial for treason. Therefore, the authorities passed a new law that saw the Americans

armed support, their position was hopeless. Escape was a forlorn hope. The British patrolled the river with increased firepower.

Early on, the Patriot leader, Colonel Nils Gustaf Von Schoultz, believed that the Canadian people would rise in revolt, but all the effort and sacrifice was to no avail; the much hoped-for revolution of the Canadians did not eventuate. Unfortunately for the Americans, the surrounding populace was much more supportive of the Crown.

I often thought about the Hunters and Hiram when the hopelessness of the situation finally dawned on the be-

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<sup>3</sup> Quote from Stephen Wright found in Cassandra Pybus and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, *American Citizens, British Slaves: Yankee Political Prisoners in an Australian Penal Colony 1839–1850* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002) 3.

placed on trial for the “Piratical Invasion of Canada.” They did have to cross the St. Lawrence River when they attempted to free the Canadians; water is water. Thus they could be classified as pirates.

Unfortunately, some Patriots did pay with their lives, such as Nils Gustaf Von Schoultz—seen as their leader at “The Battle of the Windmill.” Hiram also was tried and initially sentenced to be hanged. Fortunately for his descendants, the court decided to spare his life along with others, and he was sentenced to transportation to the other side of the world, Van Diemen’s Land.

Sir George William Arthur, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, was responsible for sending the Patriots, both French Canadian and American, to the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land even though, technically, no governor or lieutenant governor had the authority to transport prisoners between colonies. Sir George was familiar with Van Diemen’s Land after being the Lieutenant Governor of the penal settlements there from 1823 to 1837.

After being incarcerated for many months at Fort Henry, awaiting trial and sentencing, the Patriots were finally moved on 22 September 1839 onto a canal boat and sailed through the Thousand Islands to the Port of Quebec. As they watched the United States on the opposite shore go past, each man must have been tortured mentally seeing how close they were to home, without hope of breaking free. Apart from this, none knew what was to befall them.

On the other hand Captain James

Wood, master of Her Majesty’s ship *Buffalo*, knew their destination. Within a short period, the prisoners were below deck, knowing that they were headed to a prison colony far away from their loved ones. Fortunately, they could at least exercise on deck. Ironically, *Buffalo*, an old warship, had, earlier in its career, transported the first free settlers to the Colony of South Australia. The voyage would be horrendous for Hiram and the other prisoners, especially with storms and the tropical heat, were confined much of the time below deck. Also, they knew that each passing day meant that they were further from home.

Sailing directly to Australia, with only a stop at Rio Janeiro, the prisoners never left the ship, and were allowed only short periods on deck to wash their clothes and air their bedding. It a great blessing to finally reach land on 12 February 1840; some of the prisoners, when they disembarked, had trouble walking on solid land after being at sea for months. The French Canadians were, unfortunately, to continue the voyage to Sydney.

### Van Diemen’s Land

After disembarkation, the next part of their torment began: the life of a convict in Van Diemen’s Land. Each man was processed and the group of Americans was forcefully walked to a probation station at Sandy Bay, near Hobart. On their way, they witnessed some condemned men about to be launched into eternity standing on the gallows; a reminder of the stark reality they all faced. When they arrived at Sandy Bay, the

Patriots were housed in small buildings consisting of four walls and earthen floors that did not deter the elements. They were cold, hungry, and a long way from home.

Lieutenant Governor John Franklin, who, years later, was to lose his life in the Arctic seeking the Northwest Passage, had not had to deal with political prisoners before. His instructions from the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord John Russell, were to separate these political prisoners from the general convict class. As it turned out, Franklin had the Patriots work long hours on road gangs from early to late.

After this introduction to convict life, the Patriots were moved around Van Diemen's Land from one probation station to another, working in many situations. They always viewed themselves as a distinct group, not to be confused with the general convict populace.

What must Hiram Sharp have thought and experienced in his many labours? Fortunately, several references that refer to Hiram by name give us a glimpse. One reference in the convict records reveals that Lieutenant William Gunn ordered that "It be recorded in order to be taken into favourable consideration when he (Hiram) may apply for indulgences his good conduct in the pursuit of the bushrangers and murderers, Jeffs and Conway."<sup>4</sup> Another was a reference in an American newspaper that

gave an example of steely determination. Hiram, it was reported, "was flagellated because he would not touch his cap to the superintendent, an English transported felon and say 'sir' to him when he spoke, but even after being flogged unmercifully he would not touch his cap to him."<sup>5</sup> This could be propaganda, but similar documented reports can be found throughout the British convict system. Another interesting quote written by another patriot, William Gates, refers to an overseer, Sandyloe:

At last we were determined to rid ourselves of the detested imp, at all risks. Having talked the matter over, we drew lots, when it fell upon Hiram Sharp and myself to waylay him on his way from the tavern. The carpenter made us two stout, heavy bludgeons, with which we stole out after dark, and secreted ourselves behind a large stump of the green tree, some thirty rods from the station and directly in the path Sandyloe came. It was a very dark night, and withal stormy. We watched in vain till past midnight when we returned to our hut. He did not come that night, nor ever again, to muster us.<sup>6</sup>

One is left wondering what misadventure Sandyloe might have had that night; he obviously was not popular, at least among the Patriots. It must be said that the stories of the Patriots lend themselves to some interesting reading.

## The Path to Discovery

Now some readers must wonder how an Australian would become inter-

<sup>4</sup> See Archives Office of Tasmania, CON 31/1/41, page 122, digitized record.

<sup>5</sup> *Onondaga Standard*, 23 July 1842."

<sup>6</sup> William Gates, *Recollections of Life in Van Diemen's* (1850).



ested in a provincial conflict on the other side of the world. I must admit that, like most Australians, I had no idea of the Patriot War in Upper Canada and had never heard of it, but here in Sydney, there is a local government area known as the City of Canada Bay. Also, in Sydney Harbour, there are three bays named: Canada Bay, Exile Bay, and France Bay, but apart from wondering why such names are found here, it engendered no interest. I later discovered that the area around the suburb of Concord was where the French Canadians spent their incarceration.

My wife, Margaret, set me on this course of discovery, uncovering this incredible story. My father had researched his family tree, and Margaret would say, "I wish I knew about my family history." The catalyst that finally inspired me to seek information was a family reunion held in Mitchell, Queensland, in 1999, which Margaret's mother, Gwendoline, attended. At the reunion, the attendees were each given some Family History Notes. Armed with this sparse information and with the sudden and unexpected death of Margaret's mother in 2005, I set out on my quest to seek a more detailed historical account of Hiram Sharp's life. As it turned out, Hiram Sharp is Margaret's great-great-grandfather.

The story of their ancestor was not detailed: Hiram Sharp had emigrated from the United States on a whaling ship accompanying Ben Boyd (who happens to be an important character in Australian history due to his pastoral activities

and wealth accumulated). A final sentence in the Family History Notes<sup>7</sup> stated that Hiram may have been a convict. I had these sketchy details, but how much was correct?

Fortunately, the suggestion that he may have been a convict gave me a starting point. If you have convict ancestry in Australia, thanks to the British, you can discover much, even physical descriptions. I initially began searching the records of convicts sent to New South Wales. Enthusiastically I set forth looking forward to discovering information, but sadly, there was no such record of a Hiram Sharp.

On the point of giving up this line of enquiry, I remembered the convict records for Van Diemen's Land, as it was a separate entity in the general administration of the convict system. Not without some trepidation, I accessed the Tasmanian Records. I typed Hiram's name and it appeared: yes, he had been a convict, and the records told some of his story and involvement in the Battle of the Windmill in Canada.

Upon learning about this battle, I began researching the internet, books, and other publications to learn more about the Patriot War and whether Hiram was involved. Indeed, he was: his name appears in several publications, such as *To The Outskirts Of Habitable Creation* by Dr. Stuart D. Scott; references to him were also found in various articles written by Dr. John Carter. Another interesting book was *Guns Across the River* by

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<sup>7</sup> Elsie James, "Family History Notes," Charleville, 4 September 1993.

*Meeting Ron aged 92 years and Jean Sharp in 2015. Ron is Hiram's great, great nephew, Milo Sharp's great grandson. Ron passed away in 2017.*

Donald E. Graves. All of this captivated my interest to learn more and find out what else happened to Hiram Sharp.

I corresponded with these historians and many others in North America, to discover more about Hiram and the family he left behind. This included historians and archivists in Boston and Taunton, Massachusetts, Barnard, Vermont, Friends of the Windmill in Prescott, Ontario, Canada, and Clay in Onondaga County, New York. Margaret and I even travelled to Clay and Ogdensburg in the United States and to Prescott; we also visited the Gallery Library in Syracuse, New York in 2015. Many people have been of great help, but I must thank the president of Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton, Massachusetts, Ms. Cynthia Ricciardi, as well as Ms. Sarah Kozma, a Research Associate with the Onondaga Historical Association and Mrs. Dorothy Heller, a historian for Onondaga County, New York for their great help in researching the Sharp family in the United States. All this, besides the research and travelling in Australia my wife and I undertook, helped to tell the story of this Patriot, Hiram Sharp.

All the information led to many discoveries both here in Australia and overseas, which, together with the family's historical notes, gave a fuller account of Hiram's life and family. This led to the discovery of records about his sentence, his journey to Australia on board *Buffalo*



from Canada, his time in Van Diemen's Land, and his subsequent release and joining the whaling ship, *Belle*. Much of this information was found in the New South Wales State Library, Tasmanian Collection. Margaret discovered many relatives, including her great-great-great grandmother Rebecca Sharp's (Hiram's mother) burial site at Pines Plains Cemetery, Clay. She also visited the property that the Sharp's owned and met a cousin, Ron Sharp, who was a descendant of Milo (Hiram's brother). All of this was an incredible experience.

All the published accounts of the Patriots by historians assumed that Hiram had returned to the United States on board the *Belle*. This vessel, commanded by Captain Ichabod Handy, left Van Diemen's Land on 2 September 1845. Hiram, to these researchers, had seemed to just disappear from history. The Family History Notes, my only lead at this early period, informed me that this had



to be incorrect: a trail had to be there, but not where most researchers considered it. However, a faint trail remained in the New South Wales Lands Department; namely the New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages, Coronial Inquests, "Account of Sheep at Maneroo, 1<sup>st</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> May 1867" and "Boyd and Co. Account Book and Order List, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1851 to 28<sup>th</sup> May 1867."<sup>8</sup>

I believe that Hiram fully intended to return home to the United States, as he worked on the *Belle* for several years (1845-1849), a ship that was certainly to be his passage home. Unfortunately, the ship's log remains elusive. What Hiram did not expect, but the family knew, was that he would meet an attractive and newly widowed mother of four children, Mary Ann Black, nee Casey. How and precisely where remains a mystery, but whilst researching, an interesting possibility emerged.

According to the family story, Mary Ann arrived in Sydney on a ship bearing her name. This ship reportedly was, "The biggest floating scow you ever saw, with cockroaches as big as mice."<sup>9</sup> Margaret's cousin, Paul Sharpe, began searching the "Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters"<sup>10</sup> State Records Authority of New South Wales, and one possibility came to light. On 21 May 1849, a ship, *Mary Ann*, of 394 tons, arrived in Sydney from Adelaide. Coincidentally, two days later,

on 23 May, *Belle*, on a whaling voyage also arrived in Sydney. Mary is not listed as a passenger, but it is possible that she could have boarded at Wollongong, N.S.W., where she had been residing with her young family, for the short voyage to Sydney. This would have been the easiest way to reach Sydney in that era. While only an assumption, it is a tantalizing possibility, nonetheless. It does say something of the calibre of the man when one considers that he was prepared to take on a wife who already had four children.

Again, according to the family history, Hiram and Mary Ann were married in Sydney in 1850, yet no marriage certificate has been discovered despite many fruitless searches. I believe that the marriage was in name only: a practice in Australia, at the time, that was not unusual. Even in the twenty-first century, it does not seem out of place.

Admittedly, I was surprised by how "accurate" the oral family history had been and which, in time, had been written as Family History Notes. Indeed, it was proven that Hiram had been a convict and had travelled out to Australia from the United States, though the term emigrated may be drawing a long bow. I also verified the story of how he had served time on board a whaler. It would be wonderful if I could locate the *Belle's* log to discover more about the voyage in Australian/Pacific waters. But the

<sup>8</sup> This is part of the Burnima Station Records, held in the National Library in Canberra.

<sup>9</sup> Elsie James, "Family History Notes," Charleville, 4 September 1993.

<sup>10</sup> State Records Authority of N.S.W. "Mariners and Ships in Australian Waters May 1849," <<http://mariners.records.nsw.gov.au/1849/05/4905.htm>>.

*Mary Ann nee Casey (family collection).*

question remained how did Ben Boyd become involved in this story? Further research uncovered this mysterious link.

The fantastic discovery occurred at the National Library in Canberra one day in 2012. Along with my wife and youngest son, Ryan, we drove from Sydney and arranged to meet Paul Sharpe to find if there was any evidence to support a story that Hiram had worked on a sheep property down in the Cooma/Monaro area of southern New South Wales. Paul and I spent hours, forgone lunch, and were about to give up when my wife and son arrived. In desperation, I asked her to search the last box supplied by the librarian, the "Account of Sheep at Maneroo, 1<sup>st</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> May 1867" and "Boyd and Co. Account Book and Order List, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1851 to 28<sup>th</sup> May 1867."<sup>11</sup> Within minutes Margaret stated, "Here is Hiram's signature!" Both Paul and I were astounded. We had spent close to eight hours, and my wife found the evidence in minutes; I believe there was divine intervention.

With this discovery, the tale of Ben Boyd became understandable. Hiram finally gained employment on a large sheep station named Bibbenluke as a shepherd. Ben Boyd purchased the property in about 1843. He was one of the largest landowners in New South Wales, around the Monaro area, until his death



in 1851.<sup>12</sup> In 1855, William Bradley, one of the largest and wealthiest landholders in New South Wales, bought the lease and stock. This sheep station is in southern New South Wales between Nimmitabel and Bombala. At the time, these two villages were about as remote as you could get on the Australian mainland. I found it a rather desolate area even today with not many trees, wide open, and hot in summer.

Hiram's first appointment was at an outstation named Dog Kennel (probably a rather appropriate name for an isolat-

<sup>11</sup> National Library of Australia, MSS1154, 1999. "Burnima Station Records."

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Dawson, "Sheep and Shepherds on Bibbenluke 1851–1867," *Bombala and District Historical Society*, (1996), 1.

ed area). Here, we have evidence of him signing for supplies, payment, and the records of sheep under his care in June 1851. These documents are found in the Burnima Station Records,<sup>13</sup> held at the National Library, Canberra.

In 1851, records show that eighteen different shepherds were employed during the year (between nine and twelve shepherds employed at one time, tending to thirteen to fourteen flocks). About half of this number are recorded as literate, among them Hiram.<sup>14</sup> One of the most interesting finds, thanks to my wife, was the discovery of Hiram's signature among many that just stated, "This is the mark of."

Working as a shepherd was extremely hard in an area without fences, caring for flocks of between two thousand and three thousand sheep. Dingoes, the wild dog found in Australia, would have been a major concern. The climate of this remote area ranges from extremely hot in summer to freezing conditions and snow in the winter months, as it is close to the Snowy Mountains. Coming from the far northern area of New England in the United States, Hiram would have been used to such weather conditions. From these lowly beginnings, he advanced from general work hand (June 1852) to the better-paid position of carrier in March 1853.<sup>15</sup>

One day, whilst on holiday down in the Snowy Mountains, I mentioned the story of Hiram to a friend of Marga-

ret and myself, Regina Roach, who had grown up in the southern Monaro of New South Wales. I said, "What a strange name for an outpost of a sheep station." Regina looked and stated that she knew the exact place. A few days later, we met up with her in the town of Cooma, and she came with us to Dog Kennel Creek, situated on a sheep station named Ken-nileh. Whilst standing near the creek and taking photographs, the owner appeared and enquired as to our interest. On telling him the reason, he stated that it would make sense to have an outstation there, as Dog Kennel was the first permanent water in that part of the Monaro district.

During this period, Hiram and Mary Ann's family grew. Researching the New South Wales "Births, Deaths and Marriages" website mentions that Mary and Hiram's first-born son was Milo Richmond, born on 21 November 1852, and he was baptized at Nimmitabel, New South Wales, on 25 January 1853. In all, Hiram and Mary had five children: Milo Richmond, Rebecca Jane, Michael Charles, Hiram Morgan, and Catherine Elizabeth. A baby girl died in 1855.

After working for many years at Bibbenluke, Hiram and Mary managed to purchase a property of eighty-three acres near Bombala at a place known as Crankies (Cranky's) Plains on 28 July 1857.<sup>16</sup> The cost for the property was eighty-

<sup>13</sup> National Library of Australia, MSS1154, 1999, "Burnima Station Records."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> New South Wales Department of Lands, "Land Purchase 57/2285," 1857.



*Coolumbooka River crossing where Hiram was killed (Photo by Margaret Patterson).*

three pounds. The property is considered one of the best in the district, with the Coolumbooka River flowing through, with good pasture and elevated land, so flooding would not be an issue. After purchasing the property, Hiram continued as a carrier using a bullock dray around the district and continued to build a life for his growing family.

On this property, known as Wood Lands, today, there stands an old homestead. With Paul and Margaret's aunt, we met the current owners and were allowed to look around. Paul, being a builder, was interested in the architecture of the old building. As we stood before it, we all wondered whether this old building could be from Hiram's era; could he pos-

sibly have been the builder? On close examination, near a door jamb, partly hidden, was written, "Sharp." We had been wondering before this discovery whether the building could be the original. We were left with no doubt.

After surviving an armed conflict, a dangerous voyage halfway around the world in an old sailing ship, the pain of banishment to a convict colony, and working in the dangerous job of whale hunting, one would think that Hiram's life was becoming blessed. He had finally achieved much of what he had hoped for—a family and a property. Having undergone many trials and tribulations throughout his life, he was finally to meet his fate—killed in a state of "in-



temperance.”<sup>17</sup> He accidentally fell from his bullock hauled dray as he was crossing the Coolumbooka River and was crushed within sight of his property on 19 February 1859.

According to the official record from “New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages,” Hiram is buried in an unmarked grave at Nimmitabel. Unfortunately, an earlier record has him laid to rest at Bombala Cemetery, which leaves one wondering which is correct. He died at the height of summer, so it would be unusual to keep a body above the ground for any length of time, as refrigerators did not exist for preservation purposes. What then could explain the delay in burial, unless it was that his body was being transported over some distance? Nimmitabel is at least fifty kilometres (a day’s travel by wagon) from Crankies Plains, whereas Bombala is within walking distance. This would help to explain why Hiram was interred two days later, on 21 February. Nimmitabel also held some significance to the family, as this was where Hiram’s children were baptized. I will also add that it was with the registration of the children’s baptismal name that the “e” crept into the Sharp surname. Hiram always spelt his surname without the “e.”

I wish to thank Elizabeth McIntyre, a researcher for the Bega Valley Genealogy Society, who is currently working to solve the mystery of Hiram’s burial. She, along with others, is hopeful of finding an entry in the 1859 diary of C.H. Baddeley, who was a witness at the burial, to finally

solve the question.

Whilst most Australians believe that the British authorities were magnanimous in granting democratic government in Australia, the Eureka Stockade, an armed uprising of gold miners at Ballarat, may have spurred the British to act. The fact is that men did fight to gain democratic freedom for us, but these men were not Australian; they were North Americans. The British eventually realized that there was a growing agitation for political reform in Canada; they had lost the States, and there was a concern that they might lose the Canadian colonies.

Another consideration was that democratic reform had to occur in Australia as well; Australia was important strategically in securing Britain’s dominance of the Indian and South Pacific Oceans. It was both Canada’s and Australia’s gain that men such as Hiram and the other Patriots risked their lives for freedom.

I am reminded of another find my wife and I had regarding the Patriot War that we came across whilst researching Hiram’s family in the United States. At the library in Syracuse, New York, referred to earlier, sad information about Rebecca Richmond, Hiram’s mother, appeared in an old, disintegrating book (the library’s only copy) entitled, *The Richmond Family 1594-1896 and Pre-American Ancestors 1040-1594* by Joshua Bailey Richmond (1897). Underneath the section on Rebecca, Hiram was mentioned as her son: “3810 Hiram Sharp. He was taken prisoner in the War of the Rebellion, transported to Van Diemen’s Land,

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<sup>17</sup> New South Wales Coronial Inquests 1859.



*Margaret standing at the Windmill, with permission, nearly one hundred and seventy-seven years after the battle. (October 2015).*

and never returned.”<sup>18</sup>

When Margaret and I flew to the United States in 2015, we were lucky that our new friends Onondaga County historian Dorothy Heller and her husband Alan were prepared to accommodate us and show us around the area for about a month. That month, Dorothy and Alan drove us to Ogdensburg, New York, and then the following day, we drove across the border to the town of Prescott, Ontario. The site of the Windmill was very much our centre of attention; we had to see the site of the battle.

When Margaret stood at the site of the Battle of the Windmill in October 2015, she was the first of the exiled family to have returned in one hundred and seventy-seven years. She was quite emotional at the thought that this was where her great, great grandfather had fought.

As we reached the site, we became disappointed as the Windmill was covered in scaffolding which forbade us from entering it, plus any photographs would not be so good. The day was also cold, and it had been raining earlier; it was a rather miserable day to be there, but we were excited that we had reached the site of the battle.

Margaret, as always, began taking photographs of the information signs, the Windmill itself, and the surrounding area. As she was busily involved in her photography, I noticed two workers had just ar-



rived. I walked over to these men, introduced myself and stated that my wife and I had travelled thousands of kilometres to reach this location. On stating this, they were very interested in why we had come and from which country. They were astounded when I replied, Sydney, Australia. I then stated, “Can you see that young lady over there taking photographs? Her great-great-grandfather had been one of the combatants here over one hundred and seventy years ago.” I went on to state, as these men were Canadians, that her ancestor had fought for the invaders.

As I was speaking, I looked down and noticed a sliver of stone covered by grass. I picked it up and stated that the sliver was of the same type of stone as the Windmill. We both looked at the piece, and one of the workers told me that the day before, they had broken a diamond-tipped drill when they hit the remains of a cannonball that had remained wedged in the stone wall of the Windmill. We

<sup>18</sup> Joshua Bailey Richmond, “The Richmond Family 1594-1896,” 237.

both came to realize that the piece of stone that I had found had more than likely been chipped off by a cannonball or a musket ball in the battle, and it had lain there at that spot in the ground covered by dirt and grass until the rain had uncovered it nearly two centuries later. This discovery made us realize how ferocious the battle had been so long ago. The workers also allowed Margaret to touch the wall of the Windmill, and I was allowed to take a photograph.

After thanking the workmen and leaving the battle site, we travelled the short distance to Fort Wellington, where we were able to view the Windmill in the distance. Unfortunately, on arriving at the fort, we found that due to the lateness of the year the visitor centre and fort were closed. This, of course, did not prevent Margaret from taking more photographs. Hopefully, Margaret and I will be able to return in the future when both locations are open to visitors. Fort Henry is also on our list of must-sees, as this was where the Patriots were imprisoned awaiting their trials.

I know that the hope of helping Canadians break from the British yoke, just as Americans had almost a century earlier, and bring about a totally free New World is what motivated Hiram. Furthermore, Hiram may have been hoping to gain land as a reward for his help. With these intentions unfulfilled in North America, this young man forged a new path in another British colony at the far ends of the earth and helped bring about the form of democracy that both Canada and Australia share and enjoy today.

I also wish to add that Hiram arrived in Australia at an interesting time in the continent's history. The convict transportation system that had begun in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet in the Colony of New South Wales was reaching its peak in Van Diemen's Land. Its zenith was in 1847 when over thirty thousand convicts arrived in what is now known as Tasmania. Numbers declined rapidly following the cessation of transportation to that colony in 1852.<sup>19</sup>

Hiram saw the beginnings of the Australian gold rush that began in 1851, with the initial phase ending in 1871. Thousands of people came to find their fortune from all around the world, including North America, Britain, Europe, and China, with many remaining to begin changing Australia from a convict society to the multicultural society we have today. Hiram may well have transported supplies to those fortune hunters.

Little did I know the question my wife posed years ago, "I wish I knew about my family?" would lead to the story that I, with the help of many people, would finally unravel. We discovered why Sydney has the City of Canada Bay, know of the Patriot War in Upper Canada, visited the family property in Onondaga County and Hiram's property at Cranky's Plains, discovered and met my wife's relatives in the United States, and made friends. However, most thrilling of all was to stand, see, and touch, after 177 years, the old windmill located at the site of The Battle at the Windmill.

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<sup>19</sup> "The Companion to Tasmanian History," *Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies* (2006).