

The Fenian Scare

IN THE SPRING of 1866, St. Andrews was alarmed by the fear of an impending raid by the Fenians from Eastport, an attempt by Irish Nationalists to force the British government to the negotiation table. The town formed a Home Guard and Militia to add to its Volunteer Rifles; the *H.M.S. Cordelia* arrived with a crew of 570 and a volunteer militia from Fredericton; a barracks was created from the Gove warehouse near the railway station; and the decrepit old fort at the top of the hill, which had pretty much been decommissioned at that point, was given a new lease on life with cannons and officers. The town was on high alert, patriotism ran high, and many thought a fight with fiendish Fenians was only hours away. Nothing happened. Either intelligence was inexact or preparations gave the rebels cause for reflection. There was one moment of excitement, however. A sham fight staged at Joe's Point by the *Cordelia*, accompanied by answering cannonades from the fort, brought the volunteer companies running, trailing rifles and shirt tails. Soon the town was quiet again, and in later years the Fenian scare was remembered mainly for a few amusing incidents similar to the above, for which see below. ~

Standard

Dec. 13, 1865

The Excitement

It will be seen that there has been some little stir among our usually quiet inhabitants, in consequence of the Lieut. Governor's visit to warn the people to be on their guard of an intended visit from certain characters calling themselves Fenians. We have given a condensed report of the proceedings at the meeting on Thursday. On the following Saturday, a meeting was held of the inhabitants in the Sessions room, and measures adopted to form a Guard. In the evening a large meeting was held in the Town Hall, when one hundred and nine of our townsmen enrolled and organized themselves into a Home Guard, and elected Capt. R. D. James as their Chief with eight sergeants, all first-rate men.

On Monday evening the Home Guard met in the Town Hall, and twenty-two men were selected, including a sergeant, to perform patrol duty. A telegram was received from His Excellency, stating that the Deputy Adj. General would be here and form the enrolled men into a Guard, and if approved by that officer, they would be armed. The men without distinction turn out readily and keep a strict lookout.

Standard

Dec. 20, 1865

The Home Guard continues to patrol nightly, and from the highest official to the humblest laborer, have turned out willingly in their turn. Those who cannot do so from disability have paid for substitutes; the arrangements under the able Chief Capt. Jannine are promptly carried out by his efficient Sergeants. Notwithstanding His Excellency's warning there has been no excitement among the people here; they take matters very coolly, with a real and loyal determination to do their duty, and the moral effect has been of decided advantage to the Town. They anxiously await the Deputy Adjutant General's inspection and approval that they may be armed and enrolled as an independent force, free from the Militia, and will be ready to follow their leader and fear no danger. Among them are several Militia officers and old soldiers and their Chief was formerly a Captain in H. M. Army.

Standard

Jan. 24, 1866

Artillery Company

We learn that permission has been given by the Commander-in-Chief to raise an Artillery Company here, and the names are being enrolled for that purpose. Of course it will not interfere with the Volunteer Rifle Company which has been organized, nor should it; there are men enough, and that arm of the service is now looked upon as a most essential aid either in the field or for the protection of a garrison.

*Standard***March 7, 1866****Fenian Raid**

The telegram from New York of the 27th ult. appears to have created some little anxiety among persons who dread the Fenians. Sweeny and his men it is stated are "to make a demonstration against Canada about the middle of March with a small force and strike New Brunswick via the Maine frontier with his main column." Without in the least treating this intelligence lightly we cannot look upon it other than as a threat, because the U. S. government has given assurance to the British Government, that they will not permit any violation of neutrality. No large body of armed men, nor vessels laden with munitions of war, will be allowed to leave a U. S. port. Yet it behooves provincialists to be on their guard, and "in time of peace prepare for war." The Fenians are aware that New Brunswick or the greater part of it is in a defenceless state - but nevertheless its people are loyal, courageous, and where they have arms and ammunition will give a hot reception to the invaders, should they come.

We cannot conceive why the Home Guards here have not yet been armed, or the guns for the Battery received. It is positively disgraceful that the frontier seaport should be left in such an unprotected condition. Even the old guns at the fort were sold last year, and the field pieces of the old Artillery Company were taken away during the Crimean war, and have never been replaced, although frequently applications have been made to the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. If the place is worth holding it surely should be put in a state of defence; and now that we are threatened, it is possible that something may be done, but perhaps too late to be of any service, for our town may be pillaged and burned before the necessary aid arrives. As before stated we are not alarmist, but only reflect the sentiments and give currency to the feelings of the inhabitants when we assert that the means of defending ourselves against any predatory attack, should be placed within their power if no further aid can be rendered. The officers and men of the Volunteers and Militia are ready to do their part. The Volunteer Company keeps up its nightly drill - the Home Guards, we will let them speak for themselves.

As the outside steamers have commenced running they will afford conveyances for bodies of men who can take passage under the guise of travellers and land at any port in the province, unless a strict lookout is kept by officials appointed for the purpose. Our authorities might take a lesson from the United States government, which during the rebellion instituted a strict search of all persons landing from foreign ports as a measure of protection against raiders and others of that ilk; the officials enforced the laws with a rigor which it may be useful - nay profitable - to imitate.

Standard

March 14, 1866

The latest telegrams point to New Brunswick as the scene of attack, and even Campobello has been named as possessing the most advantages for a maritime port where they can fit out piratical cruisers and form a mimic republic. Fenian agents are said to be posted through the provinces who inform the H. C. of the exact situation of each town, its defences if any, and the value of all moveable property; in fact the leaders are as well informed upon these questions as the inhabitants.

It has been reported for some months that the Fenian circle in Eastport has been drilled, and it is also said that in Calais a Circle has recently been formed. Now all this stir and bustle on the frontier bodes no good, but if they will only "wait a little longer," they will have the satisfaction of meeting the "hated foes," either on land or sea. In the meantime, preparations are being made to warn the people, and applications have been forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief for arms, ammunition and men, and also armed vessels for the protection of Her Majesty's loyal subjects on the frontier. Up to the present we confess very little has been accomplished. Men are ready to volunteer, provided they have rifles and ammunition, and upon these being received His Excellency can call out the Militia, and the call will be promptly responded to - but field pieces are required - and also some heavy ordnance for the Fort. In some quarters there is we confess great excitement, and some families are preparing to leave. Capt. Osburn has his Artillery Company under arms and keeps nightly watch; a supply of ball cartridge and two

field pieces, we are informed, are in readiness. The men, we are happy to notice, are rapidly acquiring a knowledge of the drill, and a fine soldierly body they are. Capt. Pheasant's Company are punctual at their drill under their efficient instructor, Sergt. Quinn, of H. M. 10th Regt.

Standard

March 28, 1866

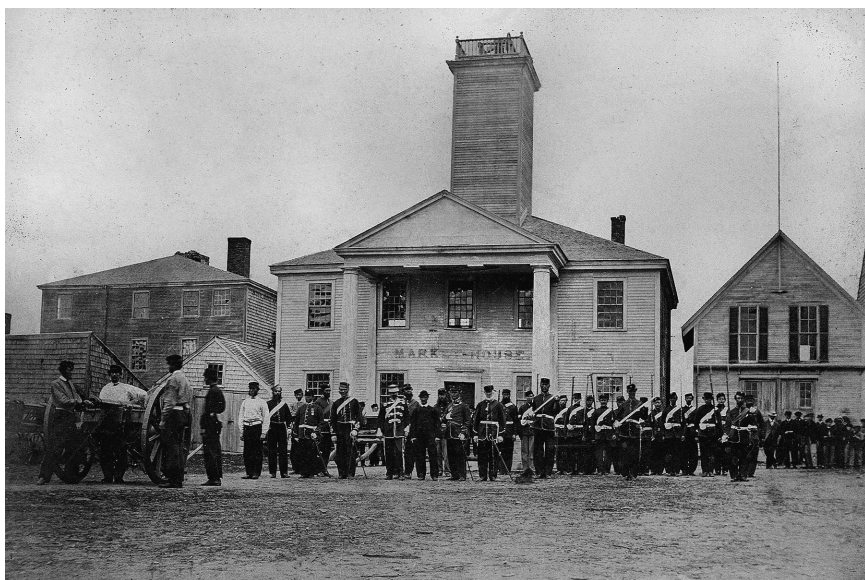
We understand that the Militia of this County are being placed in a state of efficiency, in fact on a war footing under the direction of Col. Anderson who as we previously announced has been appointed to the command of the Western Division of the Province. The Volunteer companies and Home Guards are drilled - also the Artillery Company, Capt. Osburn's. A gun has been mounted and ready for service with a supply of ammunition, cannister, grape, etc.; in fact, everything is being done in a systematic and military style, which goes to prove the wisdom of Col. Anderson's appointment, and his ability, energy and popularity. We learn that the Colonel will visit St. Stephen and St. George with the intention of placing the Battalions in an efficient state.

The organization of the Home Guards, as we anticipated in our last issue, is now complete and has been recognized by Lieut. Col. Willis. Eighty-three men volunteered for service, and two companies have been formed. No. 1 is commanded by Capt. Wardlaw, No. 2 by Capt. Stickney. Capt. James has been appointed Major of the Guards. Officers and non-commissioned officers have been assigned to each company, which assembles for drill four times a week. There are now two drill Sergeants in town, and the different companies are making rapid progress.

Standard

April 4, 1866

The Volunteers are performing garrison duty, and in the afternoons are put through a number of movements by Lt. Colonel Willis; on Saturday and Monday last they were exercised in street protection and fighting, and made quite an imposing appearance, acquitting themselves with credit. The Artillery Company are drilled twice a week in big gun practice. We learn that Major James is to be



appointed Paymaster to the Western Division, under Col. Anderson, who is at present at St. Stephen.

Standard

April 11, 1866

Proposed Fenian Raids

The news contained in the special telegrams to Col. Anderson on Sunday last was we learn from authority alarming enough to justify the Commander of the Frontier District to order out all the forces under his command and to call for extra aid. But Col. Anderson is a thorough soldier, not easily alarmed, having seen severe active service and possesses those qualities so necessary in a soldier - coolness, promptness of action, and unflinching courage. His position as Commander of the British Frontier is at present delicate and difficult, and requires no ordinary skill and management. Public and private despatches

**Capt. Osburn's
battery
company
drilling at Town
center, 1866.
Firehall to the
right.
Charlotte
County
Archives.
p290.29**



Militia pause for a photo during the Fenian scare of 1866.

Charlotte County Archives.

p245.52

are constantly arriving, exciting some people, but the general feeling appears to be one of security. The Volunteers, Artillery and Home Guards are constantly drilled and are armed with Enfield rifles. The men are quiet, orderly, and are progressing in military knowledge; it is only to be regretted that there are not a greater number called out. A fine spirit pervades the people generally, who are willing to take up arms, and cheerfully conform to martial law. Lt. Col. Willis frequently drills the men himself, and the officers under his command display an aptitude for the military discipline.

Standard

April 15, 1866

Since our last issue, there has been an addition to the Garrison; fifty men of Major Simonds Fredericton Volunteers, with officers, arrived, and a fine body of men they are, well drilled and of the right stuff to meet the enemies of their country; we know well what the Frederictonians are. Major Simonds is at present acting Commandant and drills the men daily. The large car shed of the Railway Company has been converted into a temporary barracks; the guard house on Water Street, and the Blockhouse at Joe's Point also afford shelter, and are points of observation.

Standard

April 25, 1866

Arrival of Troops

H. M. S. Duncan, 81 guns, bearing the broad pennant of Admiral Sir James Hope, G. C. B., arrived here on Wednesday evening last with Major General Hastings Doyle, his staff and 570 men of the 2nd Battn., 17th Foot, a company of the Royal Engineers, and Capt. Newman's Battery, Royal Artillery, army stores, etc.

On Thursday the troops were landed at Joe's Point, and preceded by the brilliant band of the 17th, playing soul stirring strains, entered the town and marched to the barracks, Gove's buildings. The Engineers and Artillery are quartered in the government barracks at Fort Tipperary where the Artillery have placed their guns in position. The populace turned out in large numbers to greet the soldiers on their entering the town, and the loud and loyal cheers gave proof

that our people felt safe. As the Regiment passed the Public Square the volunteer Battalion commanded by Major Simonds was drawn up in hue, and presented arms.

A finer body of soldiers than the 17th officers and men it would be difficult to find, or a more popular officer than their commander, Lt. Col. A. McKinstry, who is every inch a soldier and we learn beloved by his men. On Saturday through the Col.'s kindness the Band, led by Sergeant Fitzpatrick, performed several pieces in the Market Square, to the great delight of the people who congregated to listen to the music. We can safely assert that the Band is one of the best ever stationed in the Province; their rendering of the Soldier's Chorus was very sweet, and gave evidence that there were several cultivated voices among their number.

Officers of the Garrison

Major General Doyle - Commander-in-chief

Staff. Capt. Clarke, A. D. C.

Major Nugent - Qr. Master Genl.

Capt. Stokes - Brigade Major

Col. Clifford - Royal Artillery

Capt. Newman

Lieuts. Webber, Wills and Jason

17th Foot - Lieut. Col. McKinstry, Major Heigham

Captains - Boyd, Thompson, Grant, Creigh, Hunt, Colquhoun

Lieuts. - Fluder, Mosse, Ross (Adjutant), Dwyer, Rolph, Wedderburn,

Gamble, Forsyth

Ensigns - Mansergh, O'Brien, Loring, Stewart, Nares, Field

Surgeon Major - Tason

Asst. Surgeon - Tothill

Commissary - General Routh, and staff

Standard

May 2, 1866

Grand Review

Major General Doyle, commanding the Forces, inspected the Troops stationed in this Garrison on Tuesday afternoon. The Major General arrived with the officers of his staff on the parade ground [Fort Tipperary], at half past four o'clock, and was received with

the customary honors. After inspecting the Royal Artillery and 17th Regiment, they marched past in slow and quick time, and in columns at quarter distance. Their steadiness under arms, and the alignment in marching past was the theme of admiration of the numerous bystanders, who had assembled to witness the movement; and after sundry evolutions being performed, the General addressed the Troops at great length, nearly as follows

Standard

June 6, 1866

Beating to Quarters

On Wednesday night last, about 12 o'clock, the inhabitants of our quiet town were aroused from their slumbers by the drums of *H.M.S. Cordelia* beating to quarters, the firing of musketry, and the tramping of men and horses. The night was calm but not very clear and the cause of the unusual disturbance could not be readily ascertained. In a few minutes a big gun from the *Cordelia* was discharged, and then another, which was promptly answered by one from the Battery at Fort Tipperary, followed by the bugles at the Barracks sounding the assembly and alarm, which led to a general rush to arms. It was currently reported that the vigilant guard of the *Cordelia* had discovered several Fenian launches approaching the vessel and that they had attacked her; the cannonading commenced in earnest, and the guns were served so regularly and the firing became so rapid, that the report was credited.

The excitement, as may well be imagined, became intense - the Battery, Volunteers and Home guards assembled simultaneously; and as an instance of the rapidly with which the Battery was prepared for service, we can state from personal observation, that within five minutes the ammunition wagons were filled, the rifles strapped on, and the guns ready for action. Some of the gunners did not take time to dress but were nevertheless standing by their guns ready and willing - aye - even anxious for a brush with the Fenians. More genuine loyalty nor courage does not exist in any country. The Volunteers were also under arms in a few minutes ready to repel the invading foe; indeed, the whole people evinced a fine spirit of loyalty and genuine British pluck. They were fully impressed with the idea

that they were to face the enemy at once and were ready to do so. But that cool and intrepid soldier Col. Anderson, who commands the Frontier, and who has won his laurel on many a well fought field - in whose skill and judgement the inhabitants of St. Andrews place the most implicit reliance, instantly conjectured the cause of alarm, but despatched an officer to Joe's Point to have the meaning of the firing more fully confirmed. In about half an hour the information was brought as Col. Anderson had premised - that it was only the *Cordelia* practicing a midnight sortie. It appears that once every quarter the crews of Her Majesty's ships of war are exercised in firing the guns with blank cartridge, and go through what on land is termed a sham fight, but on the water a night attack. Com. de Wahl being under orders for Saint John embraced the favorable position in which his ship lay at the anchorage ground to exercise his men on Wednesday night and in a minute and a half from the drums beating the men turned out and firing commenced. Many of the inhabitants believed the Fenians were attempting to land, and the *Cordelia* was firing upon them. The women and children were frightened during the firing, but when it became known that it was only the usual gun practice, their fears subsided, and they now feel proud of their husbands and sons for their courage and readiness to take up arms in defence of their Flag, their families and their homes. St. Andrews neither lacks loyalty or pluck, and Com. de Wahl deserves the thanks of the people for testing even by his "practice" the courage of our volunteers; they were up to the mark and that in a very few minutes. We may add that Com. de Wahl and officers of the gallant ship *Cordelia* are favourites; indeed the enquiry was frequently made within the last two days - "when is the *Cordelia* coming back from Saint John?" The ship is now lying at anchor in the roadstead.

Standard

June 12, 1866

Disbanding Volunteers

We were informed from a reliable source that our Volunteers are to be disbanded with week. The telegraph reports state that the Fenians are returning to their homes, and that everything is quiet in Canada.

*Standard***June 27, 1866**

Colonel Anderson, commanding the Frontier, has returned to F'ton; his services in the discharge of his onerous duties during the past few months when the place was in imminent danger, are deserving of a suitable testimonial. It will serve the double purpose of being a remembrance of the Fenian designs, and the Colonel's services on the Frontier.

*Beacon***Nov. 18, 1897****The Fenian Raid****Some of the Gallant Fellows who were Called Out to Repel the Invaders**

Last week the *Beacon* was able to give a few extracts from a diary of a St. Andrews gentleman bearing upon the historical Fenian raid, interest in which as been revived through the statement that it was the intention of the Government to present medals to those Volunteers who turned out to repel the invading foe. This week, through the kindness of Mr. E. S. Polleys, who played an important part in the stirring events of thirty-odd years ago, we are enabled to present our readers with the names of some of the St. Andrews men who did soldier duty on the occasion referred to. [names here]

... Even the youths of the town were fired by patriotic zeal, and were as eager to fight for their country as were their elders. They formed a company of Cadets, forty strong, with James Haddock, now of Ashcroft, B. C., as commanding officer. James Coakley was their drill sergeant. The Cadets had a very natty uniform of red, with blue facings.

Some very amusing incidents are recalled in connection with the troublous period.

It is related that in one instance a sentinel challenged one who was approaching his post. "Halt! Who goes there?" challenged the sentinel. "Bottle," was the reply. The sentinel, recognizing the voice, ordered: "Advance Bottle and draw the stopper!" A moment or two afterwards a gurgling sound might have been heard, followed by the smacking of two pairs of lips.

On another occasion, two bibulous volunteers withdrew into a yard at night to finish a bottle. The mistress of the house, hearing a noise outside, opened the door, and the light falling upon the two men, she observed that one was her husband. Fearing that "accidents" might happen, she disarmed both men, and took their guns in the house, where they remained until the effects of the potation had passed away.

It is narrated that a private in the Home Guard undertook to take charge of the company while it was marching on the street. The Captain ordered his arrest, whereupon he made tracks for his home. He was fleet of foot than his pursuers, and reached his door first. One of the officers in pursuit grabbed the coattail of the fugitive just as the door slammed in his face. The coattail remained in his hand, while the owner of it made good his escape - for that time.

Beacon

Aug. 23, 1900

List of Charlotte County People who will receive medals for their participation in the Fenian defence.

St. Croix Courier

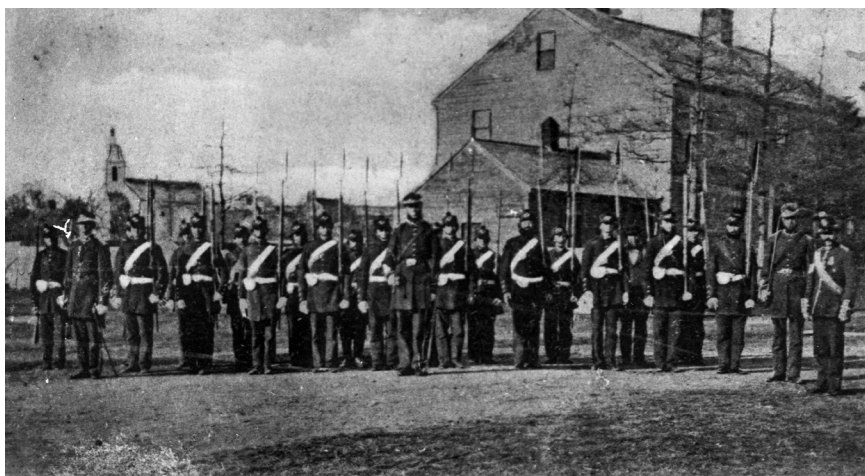
Jan. 2, 1941

"Home Guard" of the 1860's

By the Author of "Shiretown Items"

The above picture of the St. Andrews Volunteer Rifle Company was taken in 1866 at the corner of King and Queen streets. The large building just behind the group is the residence and office, (attached) of Charles R. Hatheway, J. P., and at the present time owned and occupied by Herbert Snell. The church at the left is Greenock Church (the Kirk), and the house in the distant centre is the residence (brick) of George D. Street, corner of Parr and Edward Streets.

The entire company was not present when the picture was taken, and it has been impossible at this late date to get the names of all in the group. At the extreme left is Corporal George Eggleton (late of H.M. 76 Regiment). Next is James Henry Whitlock, Capt. The tall bewhiskered gentleman at about the centre is Doctor John F. Stevenson, Assistant Surgeon. The last three in the line, reading



from left to right, are Harry Whittaker, Sergeant; Benjamin R. Stevenson, 1st Lieutenant; M. Creary, Drill Instructor and Color Sergeant. Others in the group are John Burton, Robert Saunders, Gregory Byrne, Thomas Harrison, Guthrie Treadwell, Alexander Berry, Harry Whittaker, in the front rank; and Robert Alexander, Corp., Levi Handy, Donald (Dan) McStay, Edward Stinson, Eber Polleys, Leonard Chase and James Lambert in the rear rank.

It is interesting to note the evolution in dress and firearms in the past 80 years, and also to remark the various styles of tonsorial treatment in vogue at the time when this group of men were the young huskies of the town. No doubt many of these old muskets are still kept about town as souvenirs of those stirring days of our forefathers. The dress looks odd to us now and the weapons crude. But who is there to say that improved weapons have made an improved type of war?

This Volunteer Rifle Company had been organized to assist in the protection of the town in case of a Fenian Raid from across the

**St. Andrews
Rifle Company
1866.
Charlotte
County
Archives.
p129.12**

border, talk of which at that time kept the town in a continual state of excitement. A British Company was stationed here for a while, billeted in the large Gove warehouse near the depot. Later a company from Saint John was located here. A short time after the arrival of the British Company, they caused an alarm to be sounded one night about midnight to test the extent of cooperation they might expect from the local squad. The possibility of a false alarm had never occurred to the members of the latter company, and there was a wild scramble for uniforms and guns. Most of the men arrived at the place of meeting only partly dressed, but all had their guns and ammunition.

The woman and children who were left alone were in a state of terror. One woman, the wife of a corporal in the volunteers, having had no instructions as to what to do in such an emergency, took her smaller children out and hid them in the garden behind the house. She posted her oldest boy, a lad of about fifteen, at the corner of the house with a shotgun, telling him to shoot on sight any person entering their dooryard. Fortunately the father did not return till after daylight as otherwise he would no doubt have been riddled with buckshot by his own son. There were other false alarms from time to time to keep the squad in practice but the actual and much dreaded raid never came. (The late Joseph Handy, father of Joe Handy of St. Stephen) was one of the children who hid in the garden.)