

"This Sad and Melancholy Catastrophe:" Port Maitland, Ontario and the Wreck of the Troopship *Commerce*, 6 May 1850

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The broadsheets and nautical journals of the mid-nineteenth century register shipwrecks with the same detachment that can be read in the daily traffic reports of a contemporary newspaper. The human elements in the events are downplayed and the material costs neatly summarized as insurance estimates. Yet in any tragedy it is precisely the human element, when investigated in detail, that awakens the imagination. Spans of history and geography shrink when in the narration of events one can glimpse courage and endurance, desperation and calamity.

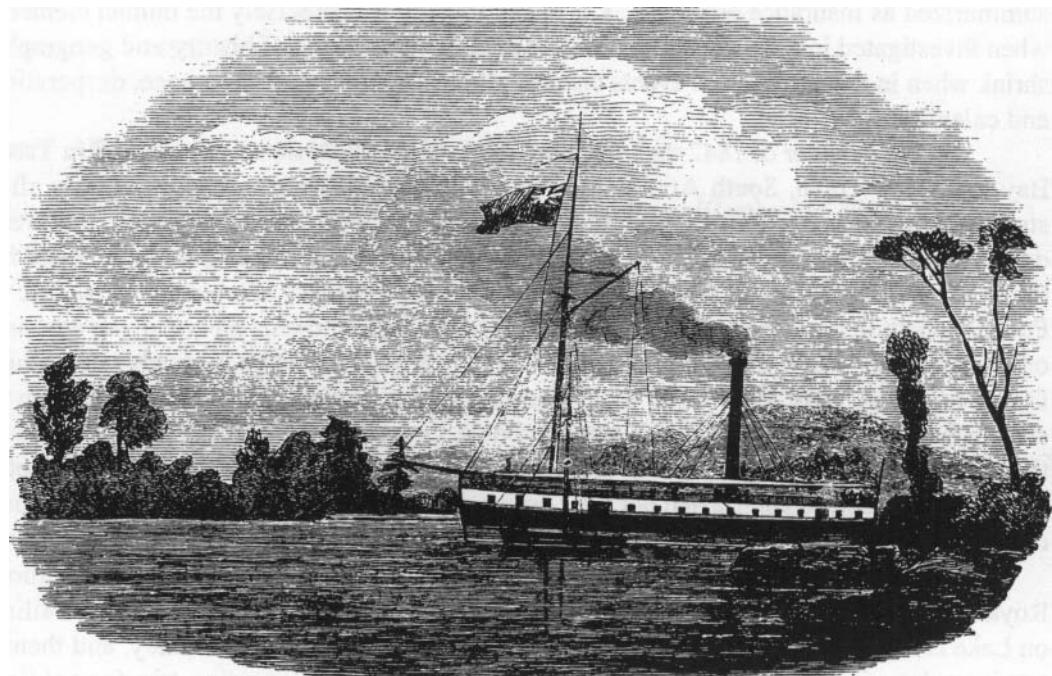
In the summer of 1842 the troopship *Abercrombie Robinson* was wrecked in Table Bay, off Cape Town, South Africa. All 700 people aboard were rescued, but only after standing on a heaving deck through the night. When it came time to evacuate, lots were drawn and the men moved off in an orderly fashion, their steadiness later commended by the Duke of Wellington himself. Ten years later, on 26 February, *Birkenhead*, en route to Port Elizabeth in the Cape Colony, with elements from six regiments on board, ran aground off Danger Point. As with *Abercrombie Robinson*, the troops remained in steady ranks while family members were loaded into the lifeboats. The commander did not allow the men to swim off for fear that they would swamp the boats. Only after the vessel broke in two was the *sauve qui peut* given, too late for 438 people left on board. Still, as one survivor wrote, the soldiers "received and carried out their orders as if embarking for a world's port instead of Eternity."¹

This same spirit was shown in Canadian waters by the men of the Reserve Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers (23rd Foot), on a clear spring night in 1850. The troops were sailing on Lake Erie aboard the Canadian steamer *Commerce*, bound for Port Stanley, and thence garrison duty in London, Canada West. It was meant to be a routine trip for soldiers accustomed to shifting around the Empire. It became a journey interrupted by tragedy off Port Maitland, an event which touches the community even today.

The village, located at the mouth of the Grand River on Lake Erie, at the time possessed the finest harbour on the north shore of the lake. During the War of 1812, it was a Royal Navy depot and continued in this capacity for some time after the end of hostilities. The building of the Welland Canal, and its initial connection to the Grand, ensured that Port

Maitland prospered as a transhipment port. Lake vessels moving though the town were a familiar sight, but the arrival of two troopships at the end of the locks would probably have caused more than usual interest. Events were to intensify this interest and ensure that one of the ships would become part of local folklore. For a moment, Empire and hinterland community were intertwined. The effect was enduring. The wreck of *Commerce* is the event which distinguishes Port Maitland along the Lake Erie shoreline.¹

At 5:00 on Wednesday morning, 4 May 1850, the Reserve Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers embarked from Lachine, in Canada East. Number seven and part of number twelve company were aboard the steamer *Earl Cathcart*, while number eight and the remainder of number twelve company sailed on *Commerce*. It was not unusual to move military supplies and personnel by civilian lake vessels. This had been going on since 1820, despite an oft-ignored Admiralty order directing all military cargoes to the Royal Navy. There was no real RN presence on the Great Lakes and the new *Commerce* and older *Earl Cathcart* served Army needs well.



THE "EARL CATHCART" STEAMER AGROUND AMONG THE ISLANDS OF THE RIVER ST. LAWRENCE.

Figure I: The *Earl Cathcart* steamer aground among the island of the river St. Lawrence.

Source: NAC, C8878.

Contemporary observers noted that *Commerce* was "the most perfect freight boat yet launched" and "a beautifully modelled craft." Called a "Pollywog" because of a paddle wheel being indented in the aft of the vessel, the vessel had "an abbreviated stern like that of a duck."³ Built by John Quain of Portsmouth, just west of Kingston, Canada West, *Commerce* was, according to the builder's certificate, a "Round sternen Carvel built

"Steamer" without quarter galleries or figurehead. With one deck and one mast (vessels of this era were still expected to carry sail in case of emergency), *Commerce* was registered as a 178-ton sloop, 134-feet in length and twenty-three feet across. These dimensions made it one of the smaller class of steamers specially built for the dimensions of the second Welland Canal. *Commerce* was owned by MacPherson and Crane of Kingston and Montréal, the largest freight forwarding firm on the Canadian side of the lakes.⁴

Commerce's journey up the St. Lawrence and up Lake Ontario was uneventful, and the sloop entered the Welland Canal several hours ahead of the slower *Earl Cathcart*. Upon moving through the locks toward Port Maitland, sentries were posted to keep deserters from making a break for shore and thence to the nearby American border. Early on Monday, 6 May, *Commerce* arrived at Port Maitland; *Earl Cathcart* followed at 5 a.m. The latter's paddles had been damaged, probably in the journey through the locks, and both ships waited until evening and the completion of repairs to *Earl Cathcart* before getting underway again. As afternoon passed into evening, the officers aboard *Commerce*, Captain (later Major) Frederick J. Phillott, Lieutenant Sir Henry O.R. Chamberlain, and Lieutenant Frederick P.R. Delme Radcliffe, amused themselves "picking up the fossils of Lake Erie, etc."⁵ Around 10 p.m. the officers turned in to their cabins, and half an hour later *Earl Cathcart* began its run into the lake. Captain John Cochrane of *Commerce* allowed the slower vessel the lead so that both ships would arrive at Port Stanley at about the same time.⁶

Around 11:50 p.m., with the troops and their families asleep on the covered main deck or below in the forward hold, and the officers in their bunks, *Commerce* cleared the mouth of the Grand River at Port Maitland. Captain Cochrane placed the vessel on a southwesterly course to avoid the shoal (now known as the Tecumseh Reef) which lay just off the village. The night was clear, with a warm breeze out of the south brushing across the water. Cochrane stood beside the helmsman as his steamer moved farther out into the lake. About two or three miles out from Port Maitland, Cochrane spotted another vessel, which was the steamer *Despatch*, carrying cargo between Port Stanley and Buffalo, New York. *Despatch* appeared to be running for the Port Maitland light, so *Commerce* was turned slightly to starboard, keeping clear of the shoal and still giving *Despatch* a good berth.

Despatch did not, however, change course and continued to approach *Commerce*. Cochrane could see that *Despatch* was going to cross his bow, and so turned the ship slightly to port, the shoal again limiting his ability to move any more to starboard. (Later accounts indicated that *Commerce* had two lights mounted on the crosstree of the mast and that this sight, plus the angle of *Despatch's* approach, made Captain McSwain aboard *Despatch* mistake *Commerce* for a schooner heading into the canal. Sailing vessels of this period usually carried a single light at the bow of the ship, not at the masthead, a practice which contradicts McSwain's explanation of events.) With *Despatch* now approaching dangerously close, *Commerce* was put over hard to port, but *Despatch* edged farther into *Commerce's* path, instead of keeping on its previous heading. With a collision appearing unavoidable, at approximately 12:10 a.m. Cochrane ordered his engines stopped.⁷

Soon after the engines were stopped the two ships collided. *Commerce* was struck ten to fifteen feet from its stem, on the starboard bow. The officers, troops and families were jolted awake by the impact and from the cries of those on the main deck. The officers rushed to the hurricane deck, working quickly to get those below on top. Within two minutes of the

collision, *Commerce* began sinking at the bow, the fo'c'sle already filled with water. It was here that the first victims of the wreck were claimed, as Captain Phillott indicated that three or four of the married men and their wives were sleeping in the forward hold and did not have enough time to escape the rush of water into the holed bow.⁸

Meanwhile, on the top deck the women were "shrieking fearfully" and the men "groaning and praying" until Phillott and the subalterns had the troops fall in and be quiet. Once the troops were assembled, they "behaved with the greatest and most commendable steadiness," forming two ranks along the deck. Phillott assured his charges of their safety and exhorted the troops to remain steady, to which they answered, "We will, we will, Sir." An attempt to lower *Commerce*'s boat failed, as some of the troops and their wives tried to get into it too soon. Instead, they fell into the water before the boat was completely lowered. The men trying to disentangle it were thrown into the water as the ship began to list to port. Phillott managed to save two of these people, but "the others [he] could not see again."

Within three minutes of the collision the lower decks were completely flooded and the incoming water drowned the engine fires. Fortunately, James Robertson, the ship's engineer, had the presence of mind, despite being injured, to release the safety valve, blow off the steam and prevent an explosion. At about 12:20 a.m. *Commerce* listed slightly to starboard, righted itself, and began to settle. It then plunged on its starboard side and rolled over, the survivors scrambling over the hull as the vessel careened. As it did so, Phillott ordered the troops to get a footing on the side and hold tight. Some of the men were unable to get a proper grip and slid into the lake. A few of the married men and their wives attempted to swim to *Despatch*, which lay some fifty yards off the starboard bow. They never made it. It was now, reported Phillott, that "the greatest loss of life which I have so much to deplore took place."

Captain Cochrane, two of his crew and Assistant Surgeon Douglas Grantham of the 23rd and George Parker, a young boy who had been travelling as a guest of the regiment (he was the son of a Montréal military officer), had climbed the mast to escape the sinking. Cochrane and his crewmen climbed back down again before *Commerce* keeled over, while Rogers and Grantham were thrown far from the ship's side. Neither could swim and were lost in the tangle of rigging. The tragedy was particularly sad in Grantham's case, as he had recently married in Montréal and left behind a young wife and infant.

Those on *Commerce*'s side had difficulty keeping their footing as the hull was now just barely afloat. Phillott noted that the side of the hull was about six inches under water, and this situation combined with the night swell and the ship's rolling to throw many survivors into the waves. "It was," he lamented, "utterly out of my power to help them." After ten minutes of balancing on *Commerce*'s side — and thirty minutes after the collision — *Despatch* finally drew alongside *Commerce*'s keel. A rope was tossed to the survivors and the slow work of moving them to safety began.'

There was some controversy over why Captain McSwain waited so long to move to the rescue, but later reports indicated that he had to deal with problems on his own damaged ship before picking up survivors. The passengers aboard *Despatch* reportedly urged McSwain to make for Port Maitland, but he decided to remain on the scene "so long as a life could be saved." (In the weeks following the accident Cochrane himself praised

McSwain's rescue efforts. Cochrane did this in the face of press accusations that he was to blame for the collision.)¹⁰

As *Despatch* held station beside the sinking *Commerce*, the survivors climbed aboard with the aid of ropes and the arms of the ship's crew. Once on board, the troops exhibited a range of emotions as men learned about missing friends and families. Anguish and exhilaration met each enquiry. Lieutenant Radcliffe was especially taken by the troops' concern for their officers, observing that "almost every man pressed forward to shake hands with me when I appeared" safely on board. Captain Phillott was the last person to leave *Commerce*, jumping from the side of the hull just as the ship disappeared below the surface at about 12:40 a.m. On board *Despatch*, most of the survivors were in their nightclothes, soaked and exhausted. McSwain remained at the scene until everyone was plucked from the water, and then the survivors were huddled into a warm cabin where some began to slip into weary sleep."

When no more survivors could be found in the lake, *Despatch* was turned for Port Maitland. The residents of the town had already rushed to the beach to render whatever assistance they could, drawn from their beds by "the screams and shouts of those going down...reverberat[ing] through the forest."¹² The scene which greeted them as *Despatch* was secured to the quay was desperate, and had a profound effect on both the men and the community. Upon landing at Port Maitland the troops and other survivors from the 23rd were formed up and marched about a quarter of a mile to where the gunboat HMS *Minos* was berthed." Radcliffe called the short trek "a sorrowful march...some with bare feet, most but with few clothes." Once below decks on *Minos*, a "dismal roll call" was taken. *Commerce* had set out from Montréal with 121 officers and men, twenty women and fourteen children on board; ninety-four officers and men, twelve women, and nine children now answered their names.¹⁴

The caretaker in charge of *Minos*, Gunner Henry Hatch, quickly set about providing what few comforts he could for the Fusiliers. Blankets and day quarters were the best he could offer on such short notice, but these were gratefully accepted. Captain Phillott meanwhile remained active throughout the early morning of 7 May, sending telegrams to the military authorities in Kingston, London and Montréal, and buying provisions for his charges. Between four and nine o'clock he completed these duties, finally returning to *Minos* to fall asleep in exhaustion.

A relief committee was immediately established at Port Maitland, with locals bringing in blankets and clothes. Dr. John Jarrow, the Senior Magistrate at Dunnville (the nearest large community, to the north of Port Maitland) visited the survivors aboard *Minos* and noted that a "quantity of clothes had been sent to them and on the whole they [were] tolerably comfortable," although "making a strange appearance for soldiers."¹⁵ *Despatch* sailed back out into the lake but could find no trace of where *Commerce* had gone down. "A few hats and cloaks were found floating," wrote Radcliffe, "and nothing else." No bodies had yet washed ashore. (By the next day some boxes, including those with regimental papers and money, would appear. Arrangements were made for reporting each find.) By 9 a.m. *Despatch* started for Buffalo, travelling slowly along the coast to that port, taking with her the surviving crew from *Commerce*. thereby hampering any impending investigations.¹⁶

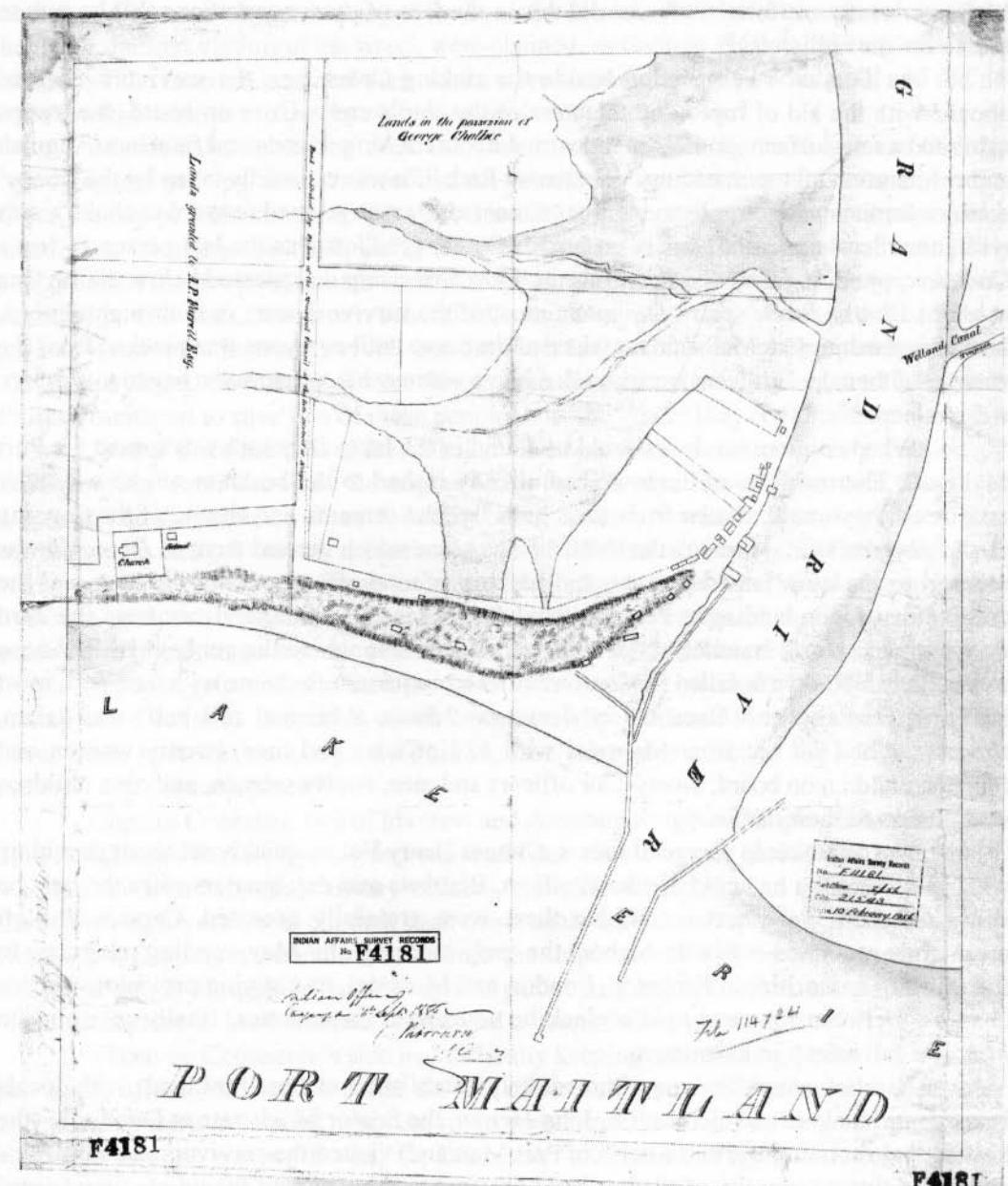


Figure 2: Map of Port Maitland.

Source: NAC, NMC0022740.

On 8 May *Earl Cathcart* steamed back for Port Maitland to pick up the survivors and take them to Port Stanley. While the vessel made its eastbound passage across Lake Erie, some of the bodies from *Commerce* were recovered. They were towed ashore in pairs

by ropes, and their footwear was removed for redistribution to those on board *Minos*. Henry Imlach and W.I. Hicks, the wardens for the Port Maitland Anglican Church, later reported considerable difficulties in getting the victims buried, as "the bodies came ashore at different intervals" over two months. This required hiring local workmen at a moment's notice to help perform the burials." To identify the recovered bodies, Captain Phillott ordered his subalterns, Chamberlain and Radcliffe, to remain at Port Maitland. The two lieutenants were also to attend the Coroner's inquest into the sinking which was then being organized.¹⁸

On 9 May, when the first division of the Fusiliers' left wing arrived at London, the remnants of the second division boarded *Earl Cathcart*, landing at Port Stanley the next day. On the 11th the survivors arrived at St. Thomas, and one week after the disaster they rejoined their colleagues at the London barracks. It was testimony to the stamina of the troops and their families that they returned to their lives and duties in such a short time.'

The arrival of a new regiment was always cause for excitement in the hinterland towns. The 23rd's previous visit to London in 1843 was accompanied by a fanfare in the local press and from the band of the 14th Foot (West Yorkshire Regiment), the regiment it was replacing.²⁰ Their return in 1850 was markedly different. Tired and ill-clothed after the shipwreck, the *Commerce* survivors presented a pathetic comparison to the scarlet-clad files of seven years earlier. Charlotte Harris, a local belle, noted in her diary the arrival of Captain Phillott and his group. "They scarcely knew me," she wrote of her acquaintances among the officers, "I am so much changed. We were mutually glad to see each other."²¹ Still, the survivors seemed to be in good health, although Miss Harris noted that Phillott seemed to have "undergone great bodily fatigue from his severe exertions during and after the melancholy accident."²² This statement could be made of all the survivors as they entered their new barracks.

While the 23rd settled into its new station, on 17 May a judicial inquiry into *Commerce*'s sinking took place at Port Maitland. The masters of both vessels involved were kept under £500 bail, with trials being set for the Niagara Assizes in the fall. A report of the case was expected to be made to the Attorney General to satisfy both the public and Horse Guards (British Army Headquarters) that the matter had been properly investigated. McPherson and Crane's insurance agent already had been on hand to collect information for a civil suit, and the Coroner, Dr. Jarron, had little doubt that this decision would go against *Despatch* and Captain McSwain. Thus, the community maintained an intimate connection with events surrounding the wreck. Certainly, they would have been the talk of the town.

A week after the sinking only one body, a child's, and a few boxes had washed ashore. *Commerce* had not been found, although the ship was only in forty feet of water.²³ The remainder of the wreck victims were found when *Commerce* was finally raised in June. Port Maitland's church wardens, Imlach and Hicks, continued to keep a detailed list of the bodies and items which washed ashore in the months following the incident. Theirs was a particularly difficult task, as most of the bodies floated to the surface during the work to raise *Commerce* from the lake bed. They were towed to shore "to prevent any exposure to unnecessary atmosphere," as the bodies were in advanced states of decay. This latter circumstance "rendered them dangerous to handle" and did not make it easy to get assistance with the unpleasant task of burial

Imlach and Hicks therefore petitioned the provincial government for remuneration for "parties who have performed a very disturbing and by no means pleasant task," and for payment of the cost of the burials. The problem was that there was no provincial law for repaying burial expenses. The wardens asked government to consider the serious nature of the costs being incurred "on such a small community who considers *[sic]* themselves called on for the honour of the Province and by every Christian sympathy to render common attention to all such unfortunate cases." They were backed in their claims by Dr. Jarrow, who emphasised that with all of those involved from the community, the work of recovering and interring the victims was "attended to in a very creditable manner."

The requests were forwarded to the provincial Executive Council for consideration, and then "put by" — that is, shelved. The Provincial Secretary's Office informed Imlach and Hicks that the government did not have the funds available for the bills submitted (cost for twenty-four coffins, at 7s.6d: £9.0.0; cost for helping recover twenty-four bodies, at 5s. each: £6.0.0; cost of mass burial: £9.0.0.), and that since the bodies recovered were those of soldiers or members of their families, the military authorities should be contacted for recompense.²⁴

As for *Commerce*, the steamer *Experiment*, along with *Luther Wright* and *Ansler Cobb*, were commissioned to raise her, an operation that would have been clearly visible from Port Maitland. Chains were run under *Commerce* and attached to its beams and then to pontoons on the surface. Onboard jacks on the salvage vessels brought the wreck to the surface. *Experiment* then pushed *Commerce* to shallow water, where it was repaired and towed to harbour. After being partially rebuilt at the Shickluna Yards at St. Catharines, *Commerce* was completed after a year at August Cantin's yards in Montréal and re-named *Reindeer*. After being sold to Holcomb and Henderson of Montréal, *Reindeer* was placed in the grain trade to Chicago.²⁵

While *Commerce* was undergoing initial repairs, the routines of garrison administration were attended to in London. All measures to re-equip the Fusiliers were approved by Horse Guards, which also forwarded its concerns and praise for the survivors. The Duke of Wellington, Commander-in-Chief, had read Phillott's report of the tragedy and expressed "his approbation of the conduct of both the officers and men onboard *Commerce* under most trying circumstances."²⁶ New greatcoats were requested to replace those lost in the sinking, and on 11 June Horse Guards ordered Assistant Surgeon Seaman to join the 23rd in London to replace the late Dr. Grantham.²⁷

Paperwork was also prepared through the summer regarding Gunner Hatch's role in the aftermath of the *Commerce* episode. Hatch was praised by the commander of the Fusiliers for his assistance at the time of the wreck and for his services after the survivors had left Port Maitland. The officers of the 23rd were especially intent to see his conduct brought to the notice of the Admiralty. His kindness in tending the survivors aboard *Minos* was "materially benefitting to the Service, by preserving the health of the Soldiers, when cold, wet, and nearly naked."²⁸ Besides securing the belongings salvaged from the wreck, Hatch also volunteered to supervise the burial of the thirty-four bodies that eventually washed ashore. By mid-September Horse Guards confirmed receipt of these testimonials, agreed with their purpose, and passed them along to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.²⁹

In the autumn of 1850 Captain Phillott and Lieutenant Chamberlain travelled to Niagara to give evidence for the Crown relative to the sinking of *Commerce*. In the district assizes the case did not go to trial, but Captain Cochrane was exonerated for his role in the tragedy. Captain McSwain never appeared in court, and had a "true bill" found against him. It was understood that he had left the country. In later years it was related that he had rowed across the Niagara River to the US. He later re-located to Iowa.³⁰

Like some Victorian melodrama come to life, ill-luck followed many of those associated with the wreck of *Commerce*. Even the re-named *Reindeer* could not escape further tragedy. While sailing to Chicago in 1857, it was caught in a violent autumn storm on Lake Michigan on 16 October and again wrecked, this time off Ludington, Michigan. Now, however, the destruction was more complete: *Reindeer* broke up on the shoreline, scattering debris along the beach and leaving as survivors only two firemen from a crew of twenty-one.³¹ Charlotte Harris, the young diarist who recorded the arrival of the survivors from the 23rd in London, was herself lost with her children on the night of 24 April 1854 when the steamer *Eldorado* sank in the Mediterranean after a collision.

The Royal Welch Fusiliers left behind the memories of *Commerce* and Canada when they sailed for home in 1853 aboard HMS *Vulcan*. With its passage secured from North America it might have been safe to assume that the regiment left behind the bad luck which seemed to trail it in the colony. Unfortunately, the men were returning to Britain to partake in an even greater tragedy, the Crimean War. Amalgamated with the First Battalion, the officers and men of the Reserve Battalion were in the opening battles of that conflict. Lieutenant Radcliffe, along with many others from the regiment, died at the Battle of the Alma in 1854. After living through the cholera epidemic of 1849 and the *Commerce* wreck, he was killed thirty yards from a Russian gun battery, leading his men in a charge to capture it. Major Chester, who commanded the Reserve Battalion at London, was also a fatality in this battle, alongside 200 other ranks killed or wounded.³²

The wreck of *Commerce* is a distant event, and compared to similar tragedies is of lesser significance. However, some importance can be derived from its study. Because of its limited scope, a detailed examination of the sources provides a view beyond the broad issues of history. It serves as an archetype for using minor episodes to promote the human equation in historical analysis. Omitting the interaction of lives from the narrative provides only a static account of the affair. The substance of this study is the people — at the group level between the troops and the community and at the individual level in the attentions of Gunner Hatch and church wardens Imlach and Hicks. Drawing out the details of the wreck and its aftermath also affords a more subtle effect: the simple commemoration of those people.

NOTES

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1. Captain P.F. Stewart, *The History of the XII Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's)* (London, 1950), 124. The Great Lakes have also known troopship tragedies. In 1780 the twenty-two-gun *Ontario*, largest ship in the British fleet on Lake Ontario, was

wrecked in a gale, with the loss of 172 lives, most from the 8th (King's Own) Regiment; see James Cooke Mills, *Our Inland Seas, Their Shipping and Commerce for Three Centuries* (Chicago, 1910; reprint, Cleveland, 1976); and Arthur B. Smith, *The Legend of the Lake: The 22-Gun Brig-Sloop, Ontario* (Kingston, 1997).

2. Port Maitland would have seen a maximum average of one to ten vessels per week by 1850, especially with the completion of the second Welland Canal in 1848. See W.R. Wrightman, "The Evolving Upper Canadian Steam Packet Service, 1816-1850," *Fresh Water*, IX, No. 3 (1994), 3-22.

3. *British Whig* (Kingston), 8 April 1848; *Argus* (Kingston), 10 April and 23 May 1848. I am indebted to Walter Lewis for these references.

4. National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 42, vol. 1416 (old vol. 205), reel C-1210, 151-153; Builder's Certificate, *Commerce*, 18 August 1848; Surveyor's Certificate of Admeasurement for Steamers, 21 August 1848; and Registry Declaration, 22 August 1848.

5. *Nautical Magazine*, XIX, No. 8 (August 1850), 458. Clues throughout this letter point to the author as Lt. Radcliffe.

6. A.D.L. Cary and Stouppe McCance, *Regimental Records of the Royal Welch Fusiliers*, vol. II (London, Forster Groom and Co., 1923), 61. Radcliffe's account of events, in *Nautical Magazine* (see note 5), has Earl Cathcart leaving at 8 p.m., so the testimony of senior officers is used as the most accurate account of the shipwreck.

7. *British Whig* (Kingston), 13 and 14 May 1850.

8. NAC, RG 8/1/C869, 29, Capt. Phillott to Major Chester, 12 May 1850.

9. Cary and McCance, *Regimental Records*, II, 61-62; *Globe*, 11 May 1850; Phillott to Chester, 12 May 1850; and *Nautical Magazine*, 458.

10. *British Whig*, 13 and 17 May 1850.

11. *Nautical Magazine*, 459.

12. Royal Welsh Fusilier Museum (RWFM), Caernarfon Castle, Caernarfon, Wales, file 4930-4937 *Chronicle* (Dunnville), 7 May 1980.

13. *Minos* was a 500-ton steamboat specially built as part of a small naval flotilla for the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes. It had a single twelve-pounder mounted on the fo'c'sle and an original complement of twenty-four men; RWFM 4930/2. The construction of this fleet was a clear violation of the Rush-Bagot agreement which limited armaments on the inland waterways, but was a response to Anglo-American tensions over the Oregon Territory. See Kenneth Boume, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America* (Berkeley, 1967), 130-131, for details on this latter subject.

14. *Nautical Magazine*, 459; and NAC, RG 8/1/C869, 25, A.K. McKinstry to Assistant Commissariat General Trew, 9 May 1850.

15. RG 7, G20, XLIX, file 5361 (Reel H-1362), John Jarrow to Military Secretary (Montréal), 8 May 1850.

16. *Nautical Magazine*, 460; Phillott to Chester, 12 May 1850; RWFM 4930-11, excerpts from I.M. Imlach, *An Old Man's Memories* (Dunnville, 1937) 65-66; NAC, RG 7, G 20, vol. 49, file 5352 (Reel H-1361), Captain Phillott's Report to Military Secretary (Montréal), 7 May 1850; and *ibid.*, file 5361 (Reel H-1362), John Jarrow to Military Secretary (Montréal), 7 and 8 May 1850.

17. RWFM 4930-8, *Gazette* (Dunnville), 17 May 1914; NAC, RG 5, C 1, vol. 303, file 1578 (Reel H-2405), Imlach and W.I. Hicks to Provincial Secretary (Canada West), 17 August 1850. Imlach and Hicks kept a detailed inventory of the items and bodies which washed ashore from mid-June to mid-August. They gave each discovery — human or material — the same detachment. For example, on 15 June they found "1 - Female partially dressed black stockings," as well as "1 - Great Coat Shell Jacket and Reg't. Trousers."

18. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 27-28, Chester to Major General Commanding, 12 May 1850.

19. That some adjustment problems were anticipated is testified to by the fact that the 20th Regiment (Lancashire Fusiliers), scheduled for relief by the 23rd, had been halted from leaving London until the Fusiliers' condition was determined. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 21, Commander, 20th Regiment, to Military Secretary (Montréal), 10 May 1850.

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20. Fred Landon, "A Tragedy on Lake Erie," *Inland Seas*, I, No. 4 (Autumn, 1945), 9-10.
21. *Ibid.*, 12. The Harris family was prominent in the London area at this time, the patriarch being the district Treasurer, and known to be "particularly distinguished among the military, for hospitality and kindness..." Sir James Alexander, *L'Acadie; or, Seven Years' Explorations in British America* (London, 1849), 1, 140.
22. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 33, Commander, 20th Foot to Military Secretary (Montréal), 13 May 1850.
23. NAC, RG 8, I, C. 869, 37-39, Jarrow to R. Bruce, 18 May 1850.
24. NAC, RG 5, C 1, vol. 303, file 1578 (Reel H-2404), Imlach and Hicks to Provincial Secretary, 17 June 1850; *ibid.*, Jarrow to Provincial Secretary, 18 June 1850; *ibid.*, Reel H-2405, Imlach and Hicks to Provincial Secretary (with enclosures), 17 August 1850, *ibid.*, Provincial Secretary to Imlach and Hicks, 7 September 1850.
25. RWFM 4930-8 and 4930-9, *Gazette* (Dunnville), 20 February 1914; and Erik Heyl, *Early American Steamers* (New York, n.d.), IV, 59-61.
26. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 40, Commander, 23rd Foot to Military Secretary (Montréal), 23 May 1850; and *ibid.*, 41-42, Military Secretary, Horse Guards, to Lt.-Gen. Rowan, 31 May 1850. See also "Memo for the Quarter-Master General," 8 June 1850, as cited in Cary and McCance, *Regimental Records*, II, 63.
27. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 48, Horse Guards to Lt.-Gen. Rowan, 4 June 1850; and *Ibid.*, 192, Inspector-General of Hospitals (Montréal) to Military Secretary (Montréal), 1 July 1850. Seaman's appointment was confirmed on 7 June 1850.
28. NAC, RG 8, I, C. 869, 65-66, Commander, 23rd Foot, to Military Secretary (Montréal), 5 August 1850; and *ibid.*, 68-69, Capt. Phillott, *et al.*, to Commander, 23rd Foot, 5 August 1850.
29. NAC, RG 8, 1, C. 869, 79-80, Admiralty to Military Secretary (Horse Guards), 2 September 1850; and Military Secretary (Horse Guards) to Lt.-Gen. Rowan, 12 September 1850. Records remain unclear as to how, or even if, Hatch was rewarded beyond these written commendations.
30. *Weekly Spectator* (Hamilton), 17 October 1850; RWFM 4930-8, excerpts from Dunnville *Gazette*. See also Landon, "Tragedy," 39.
31. Heyl, *Early American Steamers*, 61.
32. Landon, "Tragedy," 13.