

Rangers mark 200th anniversary of Battle of York



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Queen's York Rangers marched in the 200 year old footsteps of their predecessors Saturday in Toronto, in what is estimated to be the largest military parade in Toronto's history since the end of the Second World War.

The 200th anniversary of the Battle of York was commemorated in full military spectacle over the weekend in the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, and a host of other dignitaries, including Mayor Geoffrey Dawe representing the Town.



Major Adam Parkin lead the Queen's York Rangers down University Avenue in the historic parade(Auroran photos by Brock Weir) Following a display of military manoeuvres overseen by the 91-year-old Prince Philip, several regiments, including the Queen's York Rangers, marched south on University Avenue bound for Fort York, their Toronto base, for extensive ceremonies and re-enactments of the War of 1812.

Ahead of the ceremony, Lieutenant Chris Wattie, who has served for over seven years with the Aurora battalion of the QYR, spoke of the excitement shared by his fellow Rangers.

?There are going to be over 1,000 soldiers marching down University Avenue and the only thing I can think of that would be comparable in size would have been the 60th anniversary of D-Day,? Lt. Wattie recalled.

?It is a big deal for us. It is a big deal for soldiers, especially to have a representative of our Commander in Chief, the Queen, there. It is a huge honour and to be involved in a parade that big is such a huge deal.

“My soldiers, corporals, and troopers are really pumped. Being there for the 200th anniversary of a battle we fought in is really something else. To be on the ground where it was actually fought will be spectacular and I am really looking forward to it.”

While proud, of course, of the efforts the precursors of the Queen's York Rangers and other regiments put in, it was not a resounding success for the British side. After the battle broke out on April 27, 1812 following an invasion by the Americans the previous day, it was deemed a “traumatic” day in Toronto history.

With the city occupied and hundreds killed or wounded, the fledgling town was sacked, and the Legislative Buildings, a symbol of what was to become Upper Canada and, later, Ontario's democracy, were torched.

“The story of the Canadians who fought desperately to defend York (Toronto) in 1813 lives on through today's part of the Canadian Army's heritage,” said the Department of National Defence. “The Queen's York Rangers (1st American Regiment) (Royal Canadian Armoured Corps) perpetuate the Battalion of the Incorporated Militia as well as both the 1st Regiment of the York Militia (1812-15), and the 3rd Regiment of the York Militia (1812-15). Both regiments of the York Militia played supporting roles at the Battle of York.

“The Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry fought gallantly at the Battle of York, with 15 members in the height of fighting. The unit's traditions are proudly carried on by today's Royal Newfoundland Regiment. Likewise, a contingent of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and the 1st Battalion Dundas Militia, today commemorated by the Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Highlanders from Cornwall, ON were present at the battle.”

For more on commemorations taking place across the country to mark the Bicentennial of the War of 1812, visit www.1812.gc.ca.