The 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812

1812-2012

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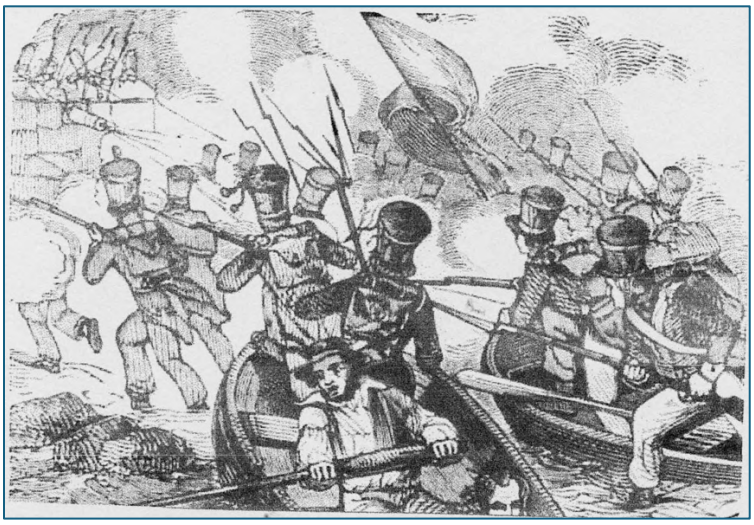
Sir Isaac Brock

1769-1812

The History of Brock Township

1818-2012

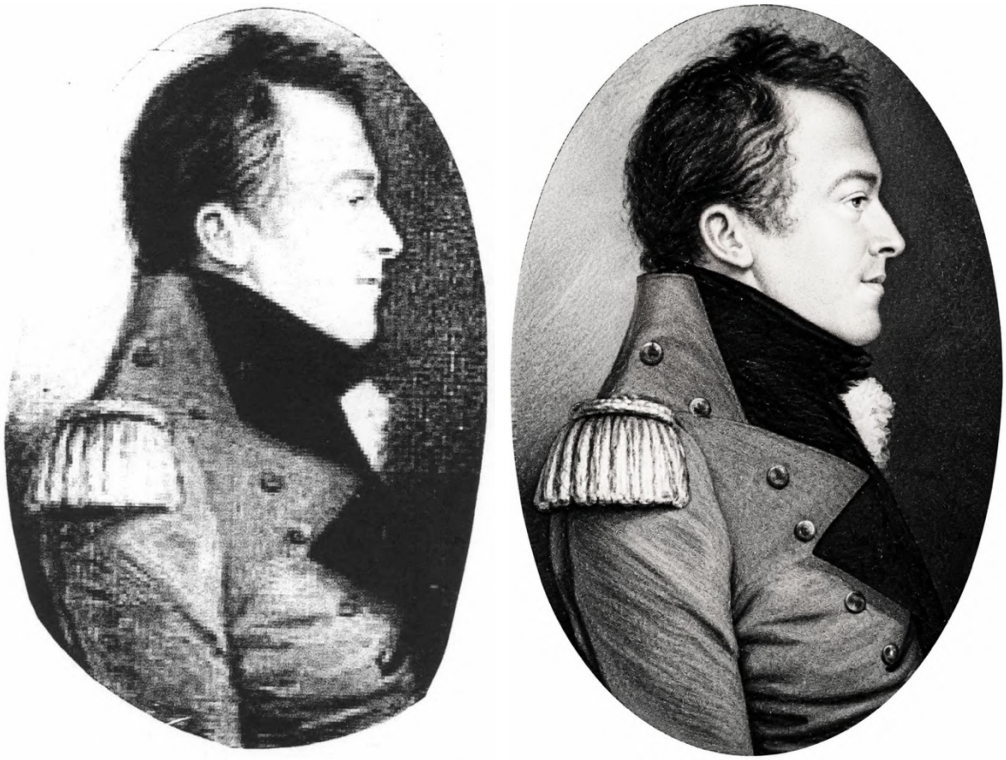


Americans storm Queenston Heights (AI Enhanced below)

200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 Booklet

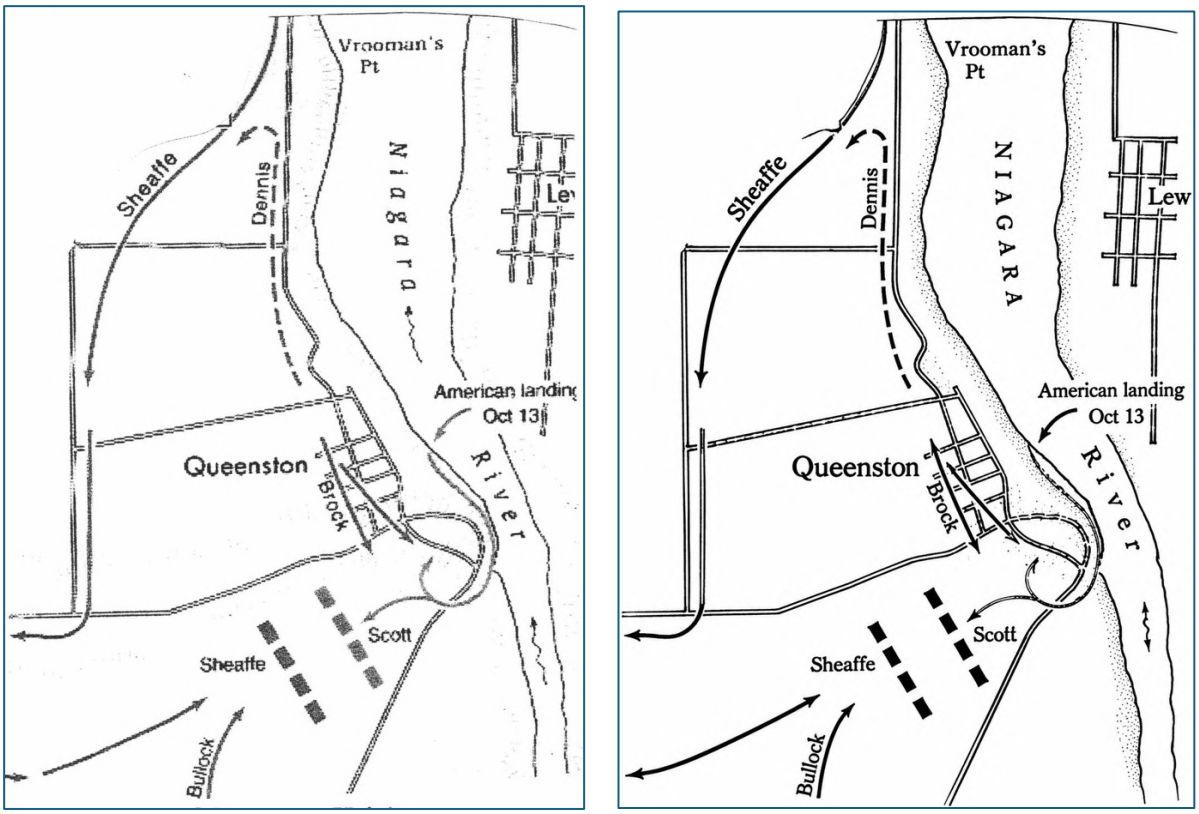
Sir Isaac Brock and Brock Township

Brock Township was named after a famous Canadian general, Sir Isaac Brock who was killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights as he charged up a hill in order that the British troops could recapture the artillery which the American forces controlled. Sir Isaac Brock was the chief administrator of Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1812 when the war began. He was a daring and aggressive commander who won many battles against the Americans even when his men were outnumbered. Early in the war he captured Detroit with his soldiers and the aid of Chief Tecumseh. He had General William Hull surrender without firing a shot. Major General Brock not only had military skill but also a magnetic personality that attracted the loyalty of not only his regular army troops but also that of local militias and native tribes. He was the unifying force that kept a defensive alliance alive during the critical stages of the war.



Sir Isaac Brock 1769-1812 (original left, AI Enhanced right)

At Queenston Heights it was the heroics of the Vrooman family that helped to win this decisive battle. The continuous artillery fire from Vrooman's Point kept over 4000 American troops from crossing the Niagara River as they feared their boats would be blown out of the water.

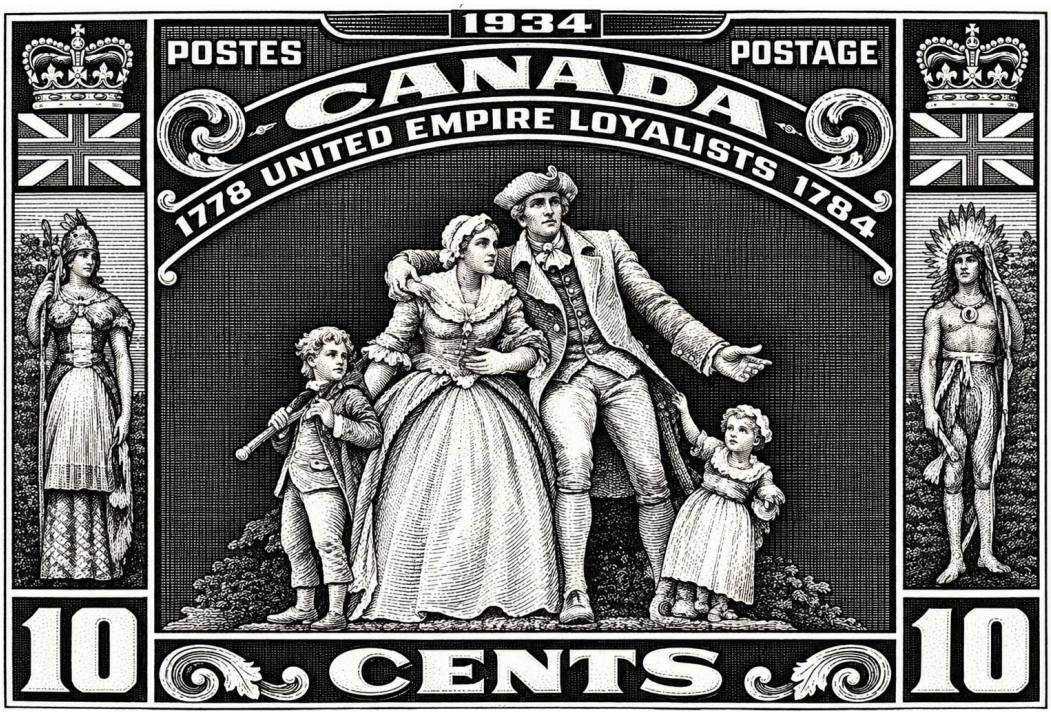


Map of Queenston Heights (original left, AI enhanced right)

About 1818 Colonel James Vrooman and his relatives moved to Brock in order to claim free land that was promised for military service for Britain. This family had a long history fighting(for Britain) against the French and their native allies and against the Americans in the War of American Independence as well as the war of 1812. After the war privates received 100 acres of land and provisions for the family for one year. As military rank went up so did the amount of land given to the soldier. The Estate of Sir Isaac Brock was given over 12,000 acres of land and about 800 acres were at Blackwater and 600 acres near Victoria Corners. In 1817,Brock Township was surveyed and soldiers who had been decommissioned from the British Army were given land as settlers for the area.

Many families who had come to Upper Canada as United Empire Loyalists from the war of 1776 moved from their homes near Canadian /United States border into this new completely forested township about 1818. These military men and families loyal to the British Crown established a culture that supported many Conservative Governments for future generations.

150th Anniversary United Empire Loyalist 1934 stamp (Original)



AI Enhanced

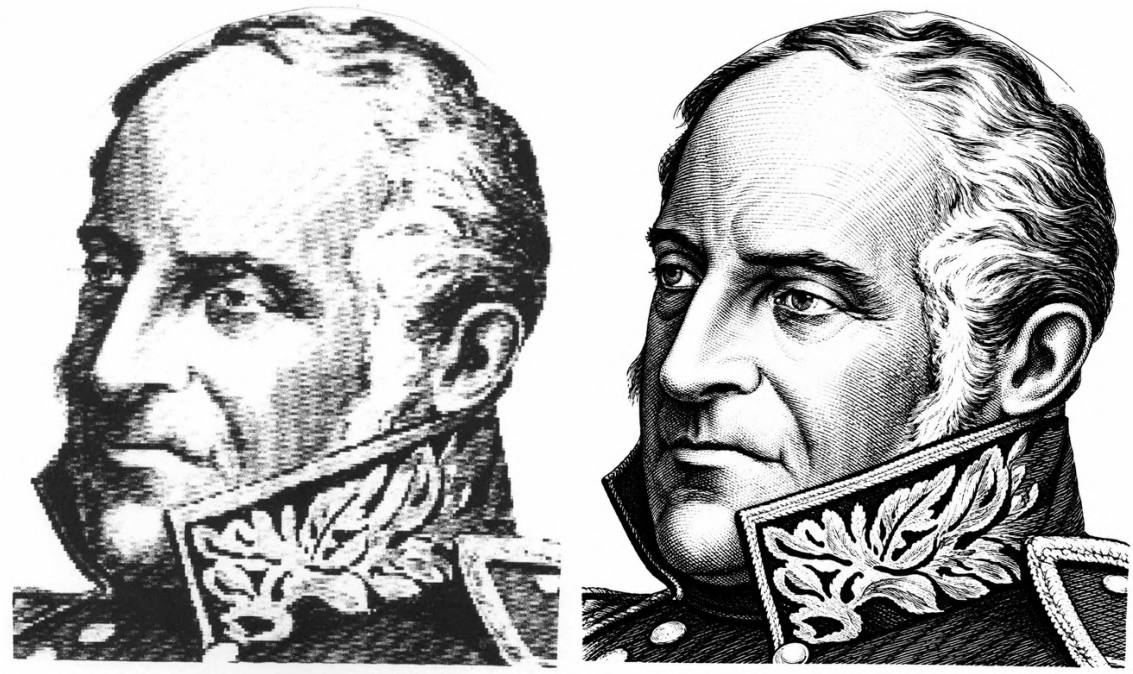
Since his death many roads, sites, and institutions have named been after Sir Isaac Brock. The Crest for Brock Township contains a soldier and eagle symbolic of the 49* British Grenadiers, a unit he commanded. A map of 1860 shows the village of Brock at the junction of Highway 12 and concession 7 of Brock before Sunderland changed from Jones' Corners. Other settlers loyal to Britain came from Ireland in 1818 as German Palatines who had military service in the British Army and owed a debt to Queen Anne of England who helped them settle in southern Ireland over a hundred years before. The families bore the names St. John, Shier, Lodwick, Baker, Lowes, Miller, and Brethour to name a few. These strongly Protestant Methodist settlers had such a defining influence on the history of Brock that one of their most well-known leaders, Phillip St. John, the "King of Brock" was added to the Crest of Brock Township. He is represented as a brock with a golden crown atop the crest.

The Crest for Brock Township (Original left, AI Enhanced right)

Chain of Office | Township of Brock

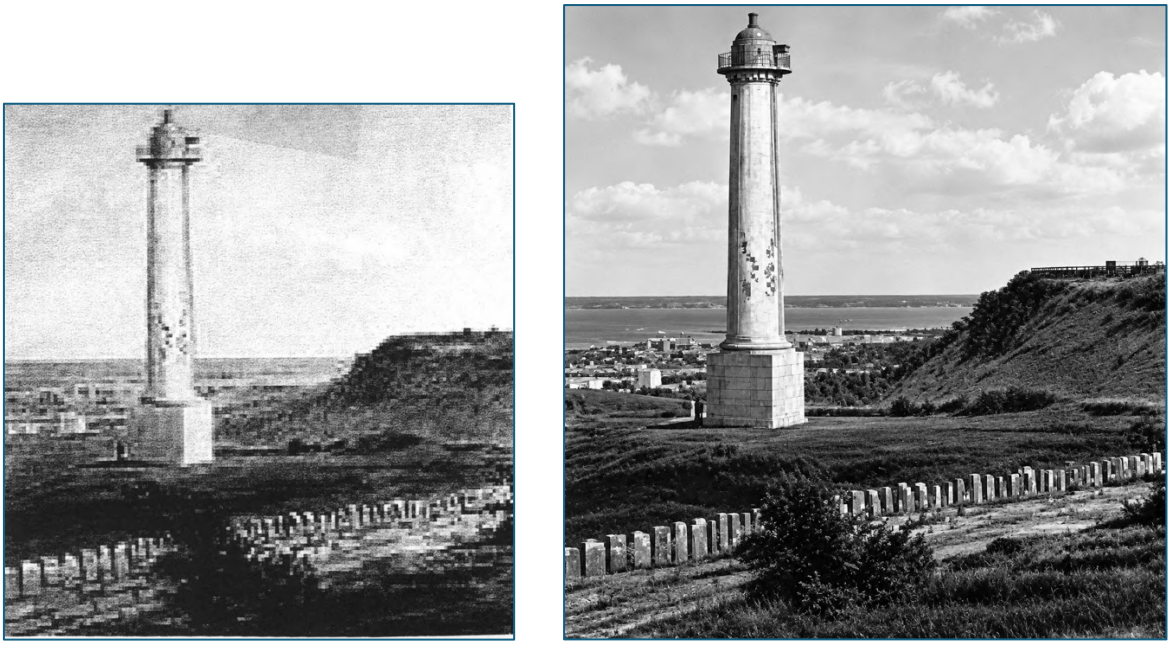
Brock township was blocked from entry by the swampy land to the south and so many settlers traveled up Yonge Street to Holland Landing. They then came over land by Indian trails or by boat on Lake Simcoe to Beaverton. From here they entered Brock Township from the north.

It is interesting to note that when Winston Churchill came to Canada during World War II and as a noted historian he visited the Queenston Heights battlefield. He asked to see the monument to the victor of the battle. When Brock was killed and his men driven back, it was General Roger Hale Sheaffe who attacked again with the aid of Mohawk warriors.



General Roger Sheaffe (original left, AI enhanced right)

He surrounded and captured over 900 Americans while his British troops had minimal losses. The monument built in 1824 to honour General Brock was damaged in an explosion in 1840 by a terrorist as part of an anti-British plot during the time of the McKenzie Rebellion in 1837. In 1853 the monument was rebuilt and has been restored over a number of years as recently as 2009.



Brock Monument Built 1824 (original left, AI enhanced right)

During the rebellion of 1837 many settlers from Brock Township took up arms and went to Toronto to help fight against the rebels trying to overthrow the government militia. As they retreated one of the rebel commanders dropped a list of the names and addresses of all the rebels. As a result, loyal troops were waiting to arrest them on their return home. William Bagshaw, a former veteran of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and first justice of the Peace for Brock Township was placed in charge of a jail to hold these prisoners until they were escorted again to Muddy Old York.

During the early years from 1817 to about 1852 Brock Township was a part of an area known as the Home District and its elected officials were part of the Council of Toronto. Finally, about 1855 Ontario County became a separate

entity with 9 townships They included Whitby, Pickering, Uxbridge, Scott, Reach, Brock, Mara, Rama, and Thorah. Ontario County was known as the Keystone County and its motto was "Peace, Plenty, Progress."

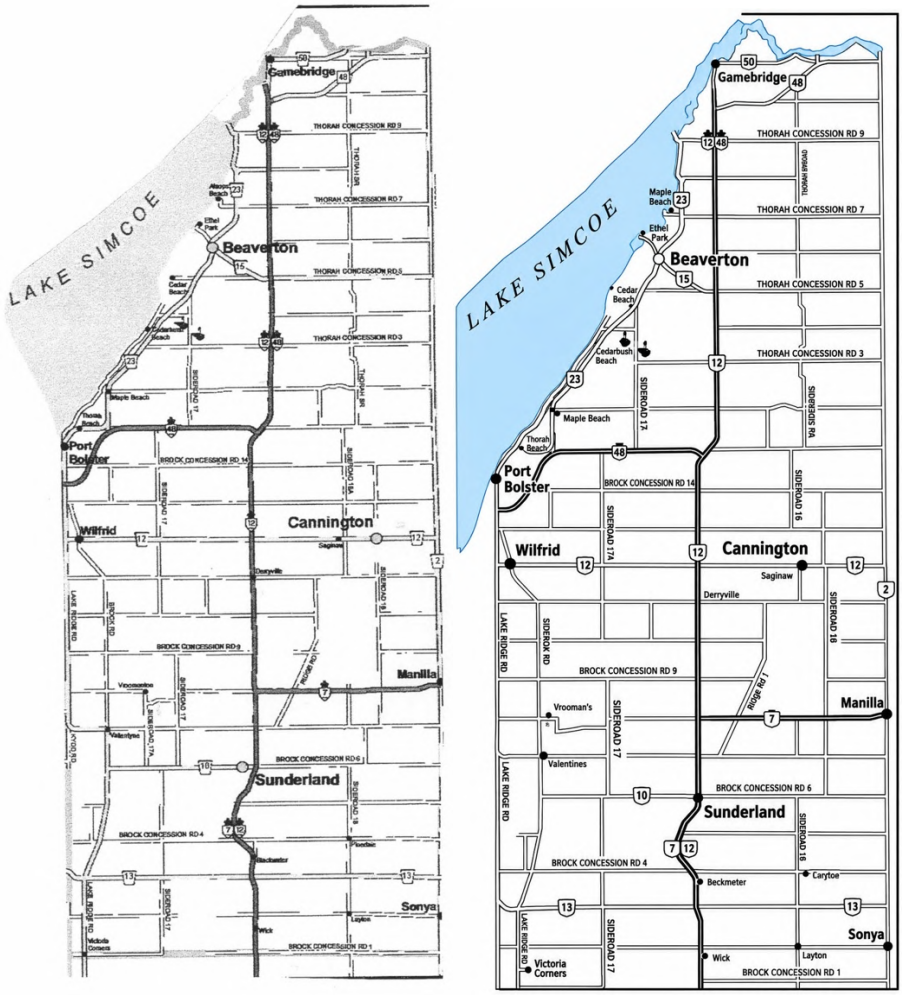
The geography of Brock Township was often responsible for the fabric of the settlers who lived within its boundaries. Much of the township was swamp land due to the wandering nature of the Beaver River and its tributaries. Roads were extremely poor and travel was almost impossible during the fall and spring. As result, the early pioneers were extremely independent and self-reliant. The local populated centres had a huge variety of local skilled craftsmen who were limited in the areas they could carry on their trade. Projects were accomplished by the co-operation of neighbours and the sharing of available resources. Each community like Beaverton, Cannington, and Sunderland had a sense of local achievement and pride. It was the building of the railroads around 1868 that provided a network of transportation for the township and linked the local economy to properous new markets The railroads like the Toronto Nipissing Midland, and Grand Trunk meant wealth to some towns and extinction to others. Vroomanton in 1860 was a prosperous thriving town with a grist mill, blacksmith shops, a church, school, hotel, post office, an Orange Hall and a sawmill. The commercial stores had wooden sidewalks. Once the railroad by passed this town, businesses moved away and activity declined until it was almost a ghost town. Meanwhile Sunderland became a boom town overnight as the new train station and Nipissing Railroad Hotel attracted new businesses and jobs. Blackwater became a major junction that linked the shores of Georgian Bay to the banks of the St. Lawrence River as grain and raw materials from the prairies moved to markets in Europe and the eastern United States.

William of Orange (original left, AI enhanced right)

The rural nature of the township and lack of reliable roads in the early stages of the development of the township meant religion reached the settlers by the Methodist "Saddlebag Ministers" who traveled great distances to preach in homes and barns. The Palatine families from Ireland had already heard and adopted the Methodist teachings of John Wesley long before they arrived in Upper Canada. Many of the Scottish families who settled to the east and north of Sunderland were Presbyterians and the above two religions united about 1924. Some of the earliest settlers had fought for the Protestant King of England, William of Orange, as early as 1690. When they settled in the new land many of these veterans formed Orange Lodges in every small village in the township from Victoria Corners to Wilfrid and Derryville. These lodges supported the protestant faith and a loyalty to the British Crown. Every July the Orange Lodges had a huge parade to celebrate the victory in Ireland for "King Billy" at the Battle of the Boyne.

The Catholic families of Brock formed a cluster of farms that stretched from Vroomanton east along the concessions just north of Sunderland. The major churches were in Vroomanton and Beaverton and they were part of the huge

St Joseph Parish District. Vroomanton had a church and cemetery known as St. Malachy. The ruling British government continued to favour the Church of England and when townships were surveyed one seventh of the land went to the Anglican Church and one seventh was designated as Crown Land. This situation really caused transportation problems as these "vacant landowners" did not keep the roads by their properties open as was required of the farmers who had settled, built homes, and cut down the forests to grow crops.



Brock Township (original left, AI enhanced right)

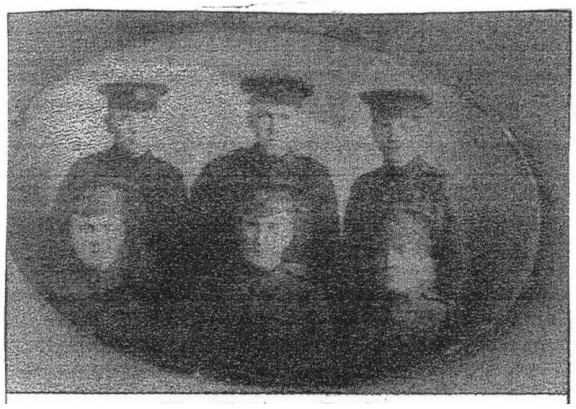
Brock Township was originally set up so that there are many concessions running from the south at concession 1 to the north at concession 14. The 200 acre lots starting a number one in the west ran from Lakeridge Road (Old Brock Road) at Victoria Corners east to lot 24 at Simcoe Street North. After

each 6 lots heading east there was a side road or main road going north /south so that there was some access to each farm. Often many of the east/west concession roads did not go all the way through because of the rivers and swamps. At one time the township hall was in Sunderland from about 1871 to 1990. The magnificent Brock Township Town Hall Sunderland was built in 1906 and been restored over time to become a functional and historic site. About 1990 the Municipal Offices moved to Cannington. In 1974 when Durham Region was formed, Brock Township joined with Thorah Township and the villages of Beaverton and Cannington.

Over the years many military men came to Brock Township as a result of their service in the British Army. James Waddell from Scotland was an officer in the Black Watch Regiment at Waterloo. Also at Waterloo was William Bagshaw as a cavalry man and his sword and pistol are on display at the Sunderland Museum. Members of the Thompson family had been linked to the Bagnall Regiment (30" Foot Guards) and had served with the Prince of Orange as early as 1688. In Ireland the German Protestant Palatine settlers were all given a Queen Anne's musket and formed a militia known as the "German Fusilliers" or "Palatine Yeomanry". Members of the Acton, Fair, Merrick, and Doble families who settled in Brock were part of a military unit known as the North Mayo Militia in Ireland. Colonel George St. John, brother of Phillip, the King of Brock) was an officer in the British Army and some of his regiment came with him to Brock, Colonel James Vrooman and his family served in the British Army for many generations.

Colonel James Vrooman (Original left, AI enhanced right)

Colonel George St John (original left, AI enhanced right)



The MacLean Soldiers (Original above, AI enhanced below)

The McLean family set a record for the British Commonwealth when 6 of their sons served in the army in WW I and they all survived the battles. George Arthur Welsh was a veteran of both World Wars. He served as a flying ace pilot in WWI and as an anti-tank leader in WW II. Later he was a provincial cabinet minister and the last sheriff in Ontario County Some of the war veterans of Brock Township are honoured on the cenotaph built in 1922 by the Sunderland Town Hall.

George Arthur Welsh (original left, AI enhanced right)

Sunderland Cenotaph