

The Attack on Oswego

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THE ATTACK ON OSWEGO.

Copy of a letter from Major General Brown to the Secretary at War, dated

H. Q. Sackett's Harbor, }
May 12, 1814. }

SIR—Enclosed is an abstract from the Report of Lieut. colonel Mitchel, of the affair at Oswego. Being well satisfied with the manner in which the colonel executed my orders, and with the evidence given of the steady discipline and gallant conduct on the part of the troops, I have noticed them in the general order; a copy of which is enclosed.

The enemy's object was the naval and military stores deposited at the Falls, 13 miles in rear of the Fort.— These were protected. The stores at the Fort and village were not important.

I am, &c.

JACOB BROWN,
Major General.

Hon Secretary at War.

REPORT.

I informed you of my arrival at fort Oswego on the 20th ult. This post being but occasionally and not recently occupied by regular troops, was in a bad state of defence. Of cannon, we had but 5 old guns, three of which had lost their trunnions. What could

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REPORT.

I informed you of my arrival at fort Oswego on the 20th ult. This post being but occasionally and not recently occupied by regular troops, was in a bad state of defense. Of cannon, we had but 5 old guns, three or which had lost their trunnions. What could be done in the way of repair was effected — new platforms _?_, the gun carriages put in order and decayed pickets replaced. On the 5th inst. the British naval force, consisting of four large ships, three



Major-General Jacob Jennings Brown (1775-1828), US Army, circa 1814. This image is in the public domain in the US where the copyright is expired.

be done in the way of repair was effected—new platforms were built, the gun carriages put in order and decayed pickets replaced. On the 5th inst. the British naval force, consisting of four large ships, three brigs & a number of gun and other boats were descried at reveille-beating about seven miles from the Fort. Information was immediately given to captain Woolsey of the navy, (who was at Oswego village) and to the neighboring militia. It being doubtful on what side of the river the enemy would attempt to land, and my force (290 effectives) being too small to bear division, I ordered the tents in store to be pitched on the village side, while I occupied the other with my whole force. It is probable that this artifice had its effect and determined the enemy to attack where from appearances, they expected the least opposition. About one o'clock the fleet approached. Fifteen boats, large and crowded with troops, at a given signal, moved slowly to the shore. These were preceded by gun boats sent to rake the woods and cover the landing, while the large vessels opened a fire upon the fort. Captain Boyle and Lieut. Legate, (so soon as the debarking boats got within range of our shot) opened upon them a very successful fire from the shore battery, and compelled them twice to retire. They at length returned to

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Piquet Guards were stationed at different points, and we lay on our arms during the night.

At day break on the 6th, the fleet appeared bearing up under easy sail. The Wold, &c. Took position directly against the Fort and batteries, and for three hours kept up a heavy fire of grape, &c. Finding that the enemy had effected a landing, I withdrew my small disposable force into the rear of the fort, and with two companies, (Romaine's and Melvin's) met their advancing columns, while the other companies engaged the flanks of the enemy; Lieut. Pearce of the navy, and some seamen, joined in the attack and fought with their characteristic bravery. We maintained our ground about thirty minutes, and as long as consisted with my further duty of defending the public stores deposited at the falls, which no doubt formed the principal object of the expedition on the part of the enemy. Nor was this movement made precipitately. I halted within 400 yards of the fort. — Captain Romaine's company formed the rear guard, and remaining with it, I marched to this place in good order,



General Sir Gordon

destroying the bridges in my rear. — The enemy landed six hundred of De Watteville's regiment, six hundred marines, two companies of the Glengary corps, and three hundred and fifty seamen.

General Drummond and commodore Yeo, were the land and naval commanders. They burned the old barracks and evacuated the fort about three o'clock in the morning of the 7th.

Our loss in killed, is six; in wounded, 38, and in missing 25. That of the enemy is much greater. Deserters, and citizens of ours, taken prisoners and afterwards released, state their killed at sixty four, and wounded in proportion — among these are several land and navy officers of merit.

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For further research and discussion:

1. Why would forts be deserted?
2. What forts existed on or near Lake Ontario during the War of 1812?
3. Draw a map of the Lake Ontario area and pinpoint the locations of all the forts you discovered existed at this time.
4. What was the civilian population in Oswego County at this time?
5. How did men join the New York militia during the War of 1812?