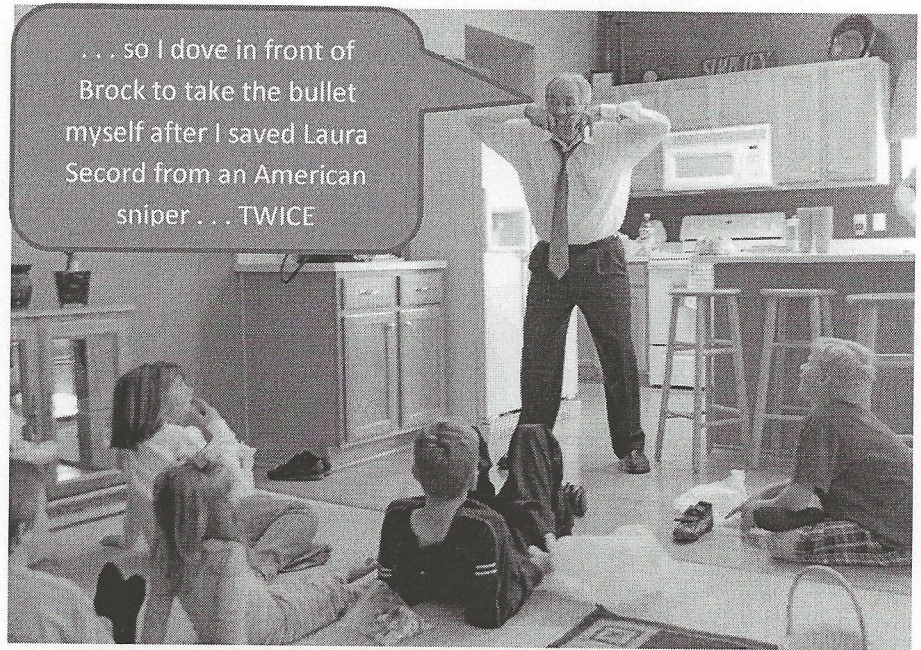


# The effects of an abortive American Invasion

## *The Family Compact*

What happens to a group that have experienced a traumatic event together?



If you are going to change a society's identity what institution **MUST** you be in control of?

Anti-Americanism was the strongest pressure holding  
Upper Canada together – David W.L. Earl

- Each of the British North American colonies experienced some form of "Family Compact" rule before the achievement of **responsible government**.
- After the War of 1812 the British Government was weary of any American influence in Upper Canada (Ontario). As a result, Upper Canada's government was stacked with pro-British, Tory (slang for conservative), Anglicans.
- A local Hamilton example was Sir Allan Napier McNab (1<sup>st</sup> Baronet) – builder of Dundurn Castle and eventual prime minister of Canada West (1854-1856).





The Story of Sir Allan MacNab (1798-1862) up to the 1820s (an example of the rise of an Upper Canadian):

- Allan Napier MacNab's father had been a lieutenant in John Graves Simcoe's 2nd corps of Queen's Rangers which saw action in the American Revolution. Put on half pay, he settled in York (Toronto) where he was denied further military preferment and a high civil placement. A sometime bankrupt, Allan MacNab struggled on the fringe of Upper Canada's Tory society.
- Into this rather unstable atmosphere Allan Napier MacNab was born. Despite the family's financial problems, he briefly attended the Reverend George Okill Stuart's Home District Grammar School at York. Contacts established by his father with the York civil and military establishment would be of use to him in his future career. Even more important, he absorbed his father's love of the military, intense social and economic ambitions, and perseverance under adverse circumstances.
- In the War of 1812 MacNab, 14 years of age at its outbreak, gave full rein to his martial instincts. He saw action at Sackets Harbor, Plattsburgh, and Black Rock, N.Y., and at Fort Niagara. In March 1814 he was promoted ensign in the 49th Foot. His military career curtailed by regimental cutbacks at war's end, MacNab searched restlessly for alternative employment. In 1816 he entered the law office of Judge D'Arcy Boulton\* Sr. That MacNab took nearly twice the average time to qualify at the bar was a result of his inadequate education and his preference for active work. Thus in his early years he dabbled in acting, carpentry, and land speculation, and in 1820 renewed his military connections as captain in the York militia. Even his marriage in 1821 to Elizabeth Brooke, daughter of a British soldier, failed to have a settling influence. Not until his wife's sudden death while giving birth to their second child in January 1825 did MacNab begin to exercise some discipline over his life. He was called to the bar in 1826.
- He decided against staying at York, where the avenues to advancement seemed blocked by the Allan, Robinson, Boulton, and Strachan families. MacNab was always reluctant "to accept a minor part," and instead set up office as the first resident lawyer in the small but growing community of Hamilton, where he hoped advancement would be easier. Capitalizing on his father's relations with the Jarvis family, he quickly befriended William Munson Jarvis, sheriff of the Gore District, whose family provided crucial business and political support. Law contacts also drew him close to the important Chisholm family of Oakville and the Hatts of Ancaster. Moreover, John Beverley Robinson, also a veteran of 1812, secured for him the position of notary. In August 1827 he successfully defended several prominent Hamilton Tories charged with tarring and feathering George Rolph, a Reformer who had been accused of adultery.



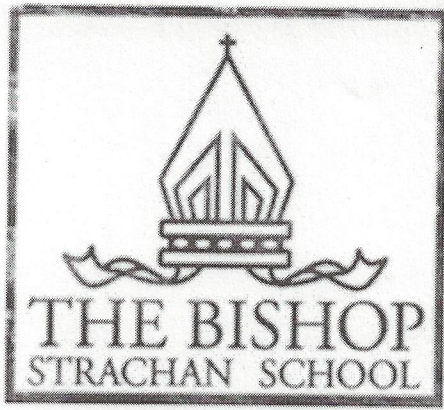
- MacNab was now able to buy and develop land in the Hamilton area. Partly through the Chisholms, MacNab was appointed in May 1830 lieutenant-colonel of the 4th Regiment of Gore militia. Dependent on him at this time were four unmarried sisters, his recently widowed mother, and his two children. In September 1831 he married Mary Stuart, daughter of John Stuart, formerly sheriff of the Johnstown District, and niece of George Okill Stuart and Henry John Boulton. The marriage provided further links to influential persons and was, as it turned out, a very compatible union.
  - MacNab understood well the mechanics of preferment, but it was chance that propelled him into the public eye. In 1829 he had refused to testify before a committee of the House of Assembly chaired by the Reformer W. W. Baldwin, which was investigating the hanging in effigy of Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne at Hamilton by a Tory mob. Prodded by William Lyon Mackenzie, the house sentenced MacNab to ten days in jail for contempt. It is doubtful whether MacNab anticipated such an outcome. But he became a Tory martyr, an image he exploited effectively in the 1830 election when he and John Willson\* defeated the Reformers in Wentworth County.
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## **More British than the British . . .**

- Most of the members of the Family Compact (close-knit group of ultra-British supporters) were based in York (Toronto) and constituted Upper Canadian high society. These people were cautious of American influence and idolized British society.
- Many members were actually dismayed when they visited England and realized how little the mother country cared about their overseas colony. This led many of them to carefully follow British politics to prevent them from being cast aside (seen as "provincials"). Some said that the Upper Canadian high society was more British than the British!
- **In the minds of the Upper Canadian Family Compact the colony was not merely a possession of Britain, but an extension of the British Nation.**
- At the head of the Upper Canadian Family Compact was Anglican Bishop Strachan (Bishop of Toronto). Strachan had moved to York just before the War of 1812, where he became rector of St. James' Cathedral and headmaster of the Home District Grammar School. During the Battle of York in 1813, Strachan negotiated the surrender of the city with American general Henry Dearborn. He is credited with saving the city from American troops eager to loot and burn it.

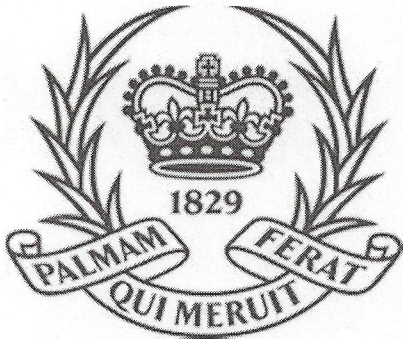




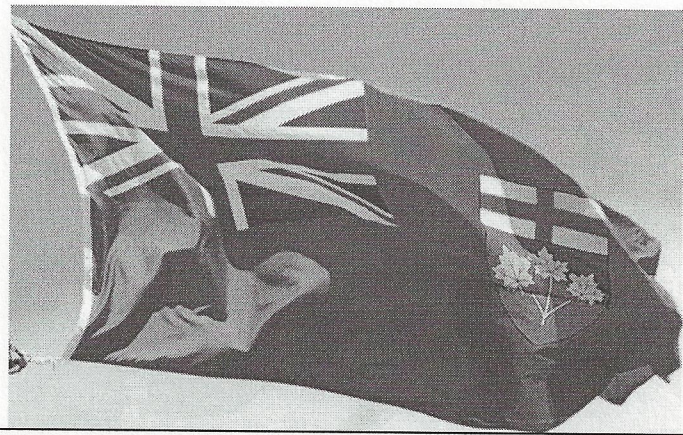


The logo of "The Bishop," the oldest day and boarding school for girls in Ontario. The school was founded in 1867 and continues to this day. [www.bss.on.ca](http://www.bss.on.ca)

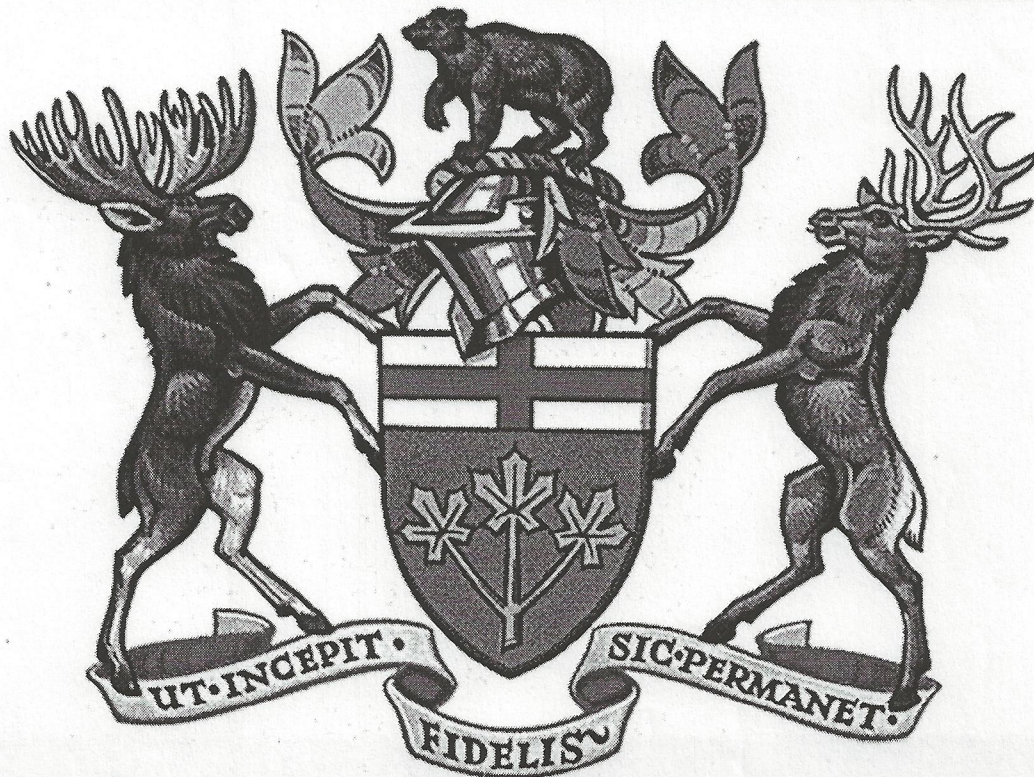
- After the war Bishop Strachan (a staunch monarchist) became a member of the colony's executive and legislative councils, and advisor to the lieutenant governors and **in charge of the colony's educational system** (in fact, many future politicians were his students). The Bishop wanted the education of the province to be controlled by the Church of England (Anglican Church). He chartered King's College (an Anglican University that became the University of Toronto) in 1827, was consecrated as the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto in 1839, became principal of Upper Canada College in 1839, and founded Trinity College in 1851.



The logo of Upper Canada College - an independent elementary and secondary school for boys founded in 1829. Prince Phillip (the Queen's husband) sits on the Board of Governors. [www.ucc.on.ca](http://www.ucc.on.ca)



The Flag of Ontario – granted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1965



The Queen's Arms in Right of Ontario with the motto "Loyal she began, loyal she remains"