

# **The historical Laura Secord in her own words**

**A letter to His Royal Highness, Prince Edward of Wales (the future King Edward VII) by Laura Secord (then 85 years old). This memorial was presented to The Prince during his visit to Canada in 1860, 48 years after the event.**

Having the privilege accorded me this day of presenting myself before your Royal Highness I beg to assure you that I do so with the greatest gratification to my feelings. I am confident your Royal Highness will pardon the liberty I have taken when your Royal Highness is informed of the circumstances which have led me to do so.

I shall commence at the battle of Queenston, where I was at the time the cannon balls were flying around me in every direction. I left the place during the engagement. After the battle I returned to Queenston, and then found that my husband had been wounded; my house plundered and property destroyed. It was while the Americans had possession of the frontier, that I learned the plans of the American commander, and determined to put the British troops under Fitzgibbon in possession of them, and if possible, to save the British troops from capture, or, perhaps, total destruction. In doing so I found I should have great difficulty in getting through the American guards, which were out ten miles in the country. Determined to persevere, however, I left early in the morning, walked nineteen miles in the month of June, over a rough and difficult part of the country, when I came to a field belonging to a Mr. Decamp [DeCew], in the neighbourhood of the Beaver Dam. By this time daylight had left me. Here I found all the Indians encamped; by moonlight the scene was terrifying, and to those accustomed to such scenes, might be considered grand. Upon advancing to the Indians they all rose, and, with some yells, said "Woman," which made me tremble. I cannot express the awful feeling it gave me; but I did not lose my presence of mind. I was determined to persevere. I went up to one of the chiefs, made him understand that I had great news for Capt. Fitzgibbon, and that he must let me pass to his camp, or that he and his party would be all taken. The chief at first objected to let me pass, but finally consented, after some hesitation, to go with me and accompany me to Fitzgibbon's station, which was at the Beaver Dam, where I had an interview with him. I then told him what I had come for, and what I had heard – that the Americans intended to make an attack upon the troops under his command, and would, from their superior numbers, capture them all. Benefiting by this information Capt. Fitzgibbon formed his plan accordingly, and captured about five hundred American infantry, about fifty mounted dragoons, and a fieldpiece or two was taken from the enemy. I returned home next day, exhausted and fatigued. I am now advanced in years, and when I look back I wonder how I could have gone through so much fatigue, with the fortitude to accomplish it.

I am now a very old woman – a widow many years. A few short years even if I should so long live will see me no more upon this earth. I feel that it will be gratifying to my family and a pleasure to myself that your Royal Parent the Queen should know that the services which I performed were truly loyal and that no gain or hope of reward influenced me in doing what I did.

I request that your Royal Highness will be pleased to convey to your Royal Parent Her Majesty the Queen the name of one who in the hour of trial and danger – as well as my departed husband who fought and bled on Queenston Heights in the ever memorable battle of 13th Oct. 1812 – stood ever ready and willing to defend this Country against every invasion come what might.

## **F.Y.I.**

- **Laura Secord was a “Loyalist” – she was born in Massachusetts in 1775. Her father supported the American cause and prospered during the conflict, but moved to Canada to open a tavern after the United States fell into depression.**
- **Laura married James Secord, a sergeant with the 1<sup>st</sup> Lincoln Militia in 1812. James was critically injured within the first few months of the war.**

- **In the spring of 1813, the Americans occupied the Canadian side of the Niagara River. All able-bodied Upper Canadian men were considered prisoners of war and were sent to the states. The Secords were spared this hardship due to James's infirmity, and they were ordered to billet three American officers. One night at a dinner party for Colonel Boerstler, the commander of the American forces in Queenston, Laura and James overheard Boerstler inform his confreres that the Americans, "shall move against Fitzgibbon at Beaver Dams."**
- **Thanks to Laura Secord, the British forces and their native allies surprised the Americans and won the day. Had the Americans won at Beaver Dams they might have been able to take the entire Niagara region. Laura's contribution was not public knowledge at the time because the Secord family was still living behind enemy lines and feared revenge from American sympathizers in the community.**