

## BILLY "THE SCOUT" GREEN

Much has been written about Billy Green, the scout who led the British army from Burlington Heights to attack the American army at the Gage Homestead near Stoney Creek on the night of June 5-6, 1813. Recently, several attempts to downplay his role in the Battle of Stoney Creek have been made by authors who have mistaken other William Greens of the area for Billy, and corrupted his actual provable history.

Billy was the first white child born in Saltfleet Township in February, 1794. His mother died within a year and he was raised by his oldest sister Anna (Jennie) Green.

His father was Adam Green, U.E., a Loyalist who came north in 1793 and bought Lot 24 of Concession 4, Saltfleet Township, and petitioned for additional land in 1794, after which he received an additional 300 acres (Lots 24, 25 and 26, Concession 5) adjoining.

It is said that Billy was a child of the forest, climbing trees, imitating the calls of animals, and thoroughly exploring the lands around Stoney Creek and the Niagara Escarpment in that area.



Billy The Scout Green

When war was declared by the United States on 18 June, 1812, Billy was 18 years old. His older brothers, John, Levi, Samuel, and Freeman, were all in the militia and fought in various battles. John was wounded at the Battle of Queenston Heights. Billy was a civilian combatant during the Battle of Stoney Creek. He only joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Militia after the battle was over. In September of 1813, four of the Green brothers are all recorded as being in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flank Company of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lincoln Militia (see paylist following page) located at Burlington Heights.

When the American army invaded the Niagara Peninsula in 1813 and began its march west from Fort George towards the British army at Burlington Heights (adjacent to Burlington Bay and Cootes Paradise), Billy and his brother Levi Green observed them from the "Mountain", i.e. the Niagara Escarpment. They both began making Indian war whoops to scare the Americans below.

Musters Roll of Capt Gresham Carpenters Company 5th Lincoln  
 Militia Stationed at Burlington Heights from the 17th Sept to the  
 24 October 1813 Both Days Indivisibly

		From	To	Days	of	Remarks
1	Capt G <sup>d</sup> Carpenters	17 Sept	24 Oct			
1	Ensign M <sup>d</sup> Douglass	17 Sept	24 Oct			
1	Chas More	17 Sept	30 Sept			Remarks
2	Wm Bigger	17 Sept	14 Oct			
3	Samuel Green	17	21 Sept			
4	Halan Solt	17	21			
5	Samuel Lu	17	21			
6	Sam on Strong	17	21			
7	John Bowllak	17	21			
8	Olyer Carl	17	30 Oct			
9	Thomas Comdon	17	12 Oct			
10	John Jay	17	21 Sept			
11	John Stewart	17	21			
12	John Combs	17	12 Oct			
13	Jonathan Combs	17	12			
14	John Skull	17	23 Sept			
15	Jeremiah Combs	17	12 Oct			
16	Jeremiah Sprigg	17	3			
17	John Lee	17	21 Sept			
18	David Biddle	17	21			
19	Richard London	17	24			
20	Benjamin Johnson	17	10 Oct			
21	Silas Foggale	17	3			
22	Thomas Pettit	17	12			
23	Robert Bigger	17	11 Sept			
24	Stephen Jones	17	20			
25	John Green	17	2			
26	Wm Green	17	2 Oct			
27	Freeman Green	17	21			
28	Isaac Pessum	17	21 Sept			
29	Isaac Carman	17	12 Oct			
30	John Gilbert	17	5			
31	Stephen Biddle	17	3			
32	John van Dusen	17	21 Sept			
33	Elias Pettit	17	4 Oct			
34	John Sheaman	17	2			
35	Petter Strong	17	23 Sept			
36	Amos Bigger	17	24 Oct			
37	James Combs	17	3			
38	Brian London	17	28 Sept			

Soldier 1 is Samuel Green, soldiers 23,24 & 25 are John, William and Freeman Green.

Isaac Corman, whose wife was Billy's sister Keziah Green, had been arrested by American soldiers, because he refused to detail where any local Indians were. He was taken to the shores of Lake Ontario where two American regiments were encamped. There he was questioned by an officer from Kentucky, during which both realized that they might be related to General William Henry Harrison, the senior commanding officer of the invasion troops. The American officer then released Isaac to return home. When Isaac commented that he would not be able to get past the sentries, the officer gave him the countersign for the night, "Wil-Hen-Har", so that he might get safely back to his house.

In the meantime, Billy had visited his sister Keziah, who was worried about Isaac, so Billy offered to go and find him.

They met each other at Davis' Corners between the beach and Stoney Creek near what is now Lake Avenue. Isaac gave Billy the countersign and told him to get it to General Vincent at Burlington Heights.

The American officer, having realized his great error, sent five soldiers to re-arrest Isaac and confine him to his house. They remained there with him and his family until the battle was over, after which they fled, leaving behind a number of articles that the Corman family kept and donated to a Hamilton museum many years later.

Moving through the forest, Billy circled back to Levi Green's house, and in doing so located the positions of the American night sentries. With this valuable intelligence, he took his brother Levi's horse "Tip" and rode along the escarpment to somewhere beyond Albion Falls and tied the horse up to a rock supporting a zig-zag rail fence and then descended the escarpment and made his way to Burlington Heights to the British army.

#### Bronze of Billy Green and Tip



(Artist – Ralph Sketch)

When he got there, he was thoroughly questioned about who he was before he was brought to Colonel Harvey and General Vincent. The fact that his brother Freeman had

earlier brought information about the American encampment would have helped to establish Billy's credibility among the British officers. With the locations of the sentries known, General Vincent asked Billy if he was able lead the troops back to the American army in the dark. Billy answered that he could.

The troops were ordered to get ready and began to leave Burlington Heights about 11:30 PM. Billy was given a Grenadier corporal's sword for his own defence and led the way. He often got out ahead of the troops and rushed back to hurry them on before early morning light would expose how few of them there actually were. In fact, the British army consisted of 704 men of all ranks. The American army is estimated at a low of 2500 to a high of 3500.

Not long after 2 AM on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, they attacked across the valley through which Battlefield Creek ran, where fires were burning, and there they found that the American soldiers had been ordered to higher ground behind a rail fence. After much shooting, a small group of British soldiers attacked up the steep bank in a bayonet charge that, although costly in British lives, routed the Americans from the crest of the bank. Billy's brother Freeman, as a volunteer in the 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, took part in that charge.

The actual fighting lasted about 45 minutes and by the early morning light, American soldiers were seen running away from the battlefield, leaving their dead and wounded behind and much of their equipment and baggage.

Billy remained with the Light Company of the 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot throughout the engagement and later recorded that the inhabitants of Stoney Creek had sent the retreating Americans on their way with Indian war whoops from the mountain above the battlefield.

Later in the day, Billy and several others got a stone boat (wooden sled pulled by a horse) and began collecting bodies from the battlefield. Those fallen soldiers were buried at Smith's Knoll and in the Stoney Creek Cemetery. Smith's Knoll now features a cairn and several cannon as a memorial to those dead.

A recounting of the story of the Battle of Stoney Creek, and Billy's contribution to the victory, was made in 1819, and has appeared in print in a number of newspaper articles and in Mabel Burkholder's book *Out of the Storied Past*. Another summary of the story, made by his grandson about 1860, has entered print. Abraham Corman also recorded his father Isaac's memories of the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 1813 and his house arrest that evening.

In the early 1850s, Billy was treated by Dr. Brown for some serious malady, during which Billy mentioned that he regretted having stabbed a defenceless American sentry with the sword he had been given before the battle.

In 1875, Billy was awarded an annual pension at a ceremony in Hamilton, along with a number of other surviving War of 1812 veterans. He had been researched and approved by a military board as a participant in the Battle of Stoney Creek, even though a civilian at the time.

Today, the Battlefield Monument, opened in 1913, carries the names of the principal participating officers in the battle, and "Scout Green."

Battlefield Monument



In 1938, another monument to Billy Green, Isaac Corman and General Vincent was erected in the Stoney Creek Municipal Cemetery.

Stoney Creek Municipal Cemetery Monument



More recently, Billy has also been memorialized in song by Woody Lambe, Stan Rogers, and George Fox.

Billy played the drum at annual militia turn-outs in June and for most of his life he could be heard on the Escarpment drumming his cadences as if the battle was underway below him. His drum, sword and his white leather pants are still in the possession of his descendants.

### Billy Green Artifacts



Billy died in 1877 but his actual place of burial is not known. He may be beside his second wife Elizabeth Brady Galbraith Green in the Stoney Creek Cemetery in the old section, but some sources record that he is buried at a hidden site on the old homestead near the battlefield where he fought.

by Billy's third great-grand nephew  
David B. Clark, U.E.