Strange Fatality: The Battle of Stoney Creek, 1813

James E. Elliott

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In the spring of 1813, the largest amphibious force in American history to that point - 6,000 troops aboard 140 vessels - landed near the mouth of the Niagara River, routed the British garrison and captured Fort George. It was the second consecutive American victory and a sign that events of 1813 would redress the calamities of 1812. The badly mauled British army reeled westward, its leadership uncertain where, or how, the retreat would end. The American forces were poised to deliver the critical blow the War Hawks in Congress had dreamed of when they predicted a four-week war to subdue the British province. 10 days later, in a field near Stoney Creek, the promise of that triumph was smashed in a terrifying night action which hinged on a single bayonet charge that carried the American artillery and decapitated the American force. Little understood, even by Canadians, Stoney Creek was one of the most decisive reversals of fortune in the War of 1812 and determined the fate of the colony that would become Ontario.



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