

## **THE ACTION AT PLATTSBURG (Pike's Ford)**

By John Gee

The British force that advanced down the western shore of Lake Champlain into New York in the late summer of 1814 was, by the standards of the War of 1812, most formidable: a re-enforced division of 10,351 including a small cavalry contingent supported by 18 guns and a rocket battery. The infantry brigades were commanded by some of the more talented and experienced generals in the British Army, all of them formally with Wellington in the Peninsula Campaign. However, the commander of the force was General Prevost, an officer with very little combat experience and no experience with a large field command, best known for his caution. The British force was to be accompanied by a naval squadron which was to defeat or at least neutralize the U.S. naval force on the lake. The much weaker U.S. Army forces in the area under General Macomb had built a series of fortifications on the southern side of the Saranac River, opposite the town of Plattsburg. The east side of the fortifications rested on Lake Champlain and was covered by the U. S. naval squadron; to the west was a heavily forested area with no road network.

After the British force arrived at Plattsburg, General Prevost ordered his troops to await the arrival of the squadron, wishing the land attack and the naval battle to occur simultaneously. The land attack would consist of a feint across the lower Saranac while the main assault would cross Pike's Ford to the west about 3 miles from the mouth of the river and pry the Americans out of their position. The British squadron sailed into Plattsburg Bay on the morning of 11 September, and the naval battle commenced immediately. The land attack started late, for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the lead brigade had been misdirected and had to retrace their route to the objective. Once the attack had just commenced and the fords had been crossed by troops of the lead brigade, word came that things had not gone well for His Majesty's naval force.

When Prevost was informed that the British squadron had been utterly defeated, he called off the land attack and ordered a withdrawal back to Canada. He felt he had no option, in that he believed control of the lake was essential to the supply of his command. This is where we deviate from history. In our world, the attack goes in as planned, the American force must fight for its life.

Pertinent rules for the AOE modification for the War of 1812 are:

1) Scale.

A) Each stand of infantry represents from 90 to 120 troops, each cavalry stand represents 45 to 60, and each artillery model represents 2 to 3 guns.

B) Each turn represents 10 to 15 minutes.

C) Because of the reduced ground scale, we will not use the reserve movement rule.

#### 4) Fire.

The only change on the fire table is the addition of rifle armed units. They fire 2 points out to 6" and 1 point out to 12" in 25mm scale. All rifle units are rated as 2 rank impulse infantry.

#### 5) Troop ratings.

British troops are rated as in AOE. Well trained U.S. infantry, usually 1814 or later, are rated as 2 rank impulse, but most U.S. infantry before 1814, whether regulars or militia, should be not be rated that highly. Canadian regulars are rated as British, Canadian militia is usually columnar. All infantry on either side is skirmish capable. U.S. cavalry is always rated as conscript, often irregular as well. U.S. artillery fires on the French/British table.

#### AOE ADDITION - ROCKETS

Rockets were used by some nations during the Napoleonic Wars, but only the British used them as field weapons. Rockets are treated as horse artillery in all ways except:

- A.) Rocket batteries may adjust up to 90' in a turn as opposed to the 45' allowed for normal artillery.
- B.) Rockets were very inaccurate, but had a significant explosive power by the standards of the day. To reflect this, the fire factors of a rocket battery are variable, regardless of the range to the target. When a rocket battery is part of fire phase, roll two six sided dice and the difference between the two is the fire factor. For example, a roll of a 4 and a 6 would give a fire factor of two. A 6 and a 6 would give a zero fire factor. Add two to the fire factor if the target is in a structure, and add one if the target is cavalry or is in woods or works.

## BRITISH FORCES

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Commanding Officer, His Majesty's Forces in Lower Canada - Prevost	div cmd (-2)	
Under direct command		
19 <sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons (+)	E-4/3/2- LC	light cavalry
Rocket section	E-rocket	rockets
B section, Addam's company	E-arty	
1st Brigade - Robinson	bde cmd-char	charismatic
Converged light companies	E-3/2/-	
76 <sup>th</sup> Foot (Hindoostan)	R-8/6/4	
88 <sup>th</sup> Foot (Connaught Rangers)	E-6/4/2	
A section, Addam's company	E-arty	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade - Power	bde cmd	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Foot (the Buffs)	R-7/5/4	
5 <sup>th</sup> Foot (Northumberland)	E-6/4/2	
27 <sup>th</sup> Foot (Inniskilling)	E-7/5/3	
58 <sup>th</sup> Foot (Rutlandshire)	R-6/5/3	
A section, Maxwell's Company	E-arty	
B section, Maxwell's Company	E-arty	

### *Notes*

All normal terrain penalties are in force. The redoubt confers on its occupants a +2 in melee and -2 for fire on the front face, +1 and -1 on the rear 180'.

U.S. FORCES

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Plattsburg Depot - Macomb	div cmd (0)	
Under direct command		
7 <sup>th</sup> New York Light Dragoons 1 <sup>st</sup> section, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battery	C-3/-/2-LC/irr R-arty	irregular cavalry
3 <sup>rd</sup> Regular Brigade (-) - (Macomb)	see above	
13 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment	R-5/4/3	
24 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment	R-4/3/2	
30 <sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment	R-5/4/3	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Section, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battery	R-arty	
3 <sup>rd</sup> New York Brigade - Mooers	bde cmd	
8 <sup>th</sup> New York Militia Regiment	C-5/4/3-col	columnar
9 <sup>th</sup> New York Militia Regiment	C-7/6/4-col	columnar
New York Rifle Battalion	R-2/-/R	Rifle
2 <sup>nd</sup> Section, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battery	R-arty	
Redoubt #5 - Wool	fort cmd	see note
31 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment	R-4/3/2	
7 <sup>th</sup> New York Militia Regiment	C-4/-/3-col	columnar
4 <sup>th</sup> Section, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Battery	R-hvy arty	see below

*Notes*

All infantry is two rank impulse except the New York Militia Regiments which are noted as columnar.

Colonel Wool can add his command roll to any unit in or adjacent to Redoubt #5. He may not leave the work unless he is attached to an infantry unit.

The heavy battery in Redoubt #5 has limited mobility. It may not leave the redoubt, but may only move from firing port to firing port to the front or may reverse its' facing. The gun is moved and can fire on the next phase at a port or to the rear of the work. The fort confers to its occupants a +2 for melee and a -2 for fire to the front, a +1 and -1 to the 180' of the work.

All normal terrain penalties are in force.