

**HISTORICAL RECORD OF
THE GOVERNOR-
GENERAL'S BODY GUARD,
AND ITS STANDING ORDERS**

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Historical Record of the Governor-General's Body Guard, and Its Standing Orders by Frederick C. Denison

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FREDERICK C. DENISON

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Governor-General's Body Guard,

AND

ITS STANDING ORDERS.

BY

CAPT. FREDERICK C. DENISON,

COMMANDING GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S BODY GUARD.

Printed for the use of the Corps



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PREFACE.

SOME fifty-five years have elapsed since the Governor-General's Body Guard was first organized under the name of the West York Cavalry. During that time the corps has been out on active service in several important periods of Canadian history. All the original officers are dead, and many of the facts and incidents of the early history of the corps are already lost or forgotten. Feeling this, I have endeavoured, at the request of my comrades, to gather together all the information I could obtain as to the organization and services of the troop, both from the official records, and from the personal recollections of the surviving officers. In the following pages will be found the result of my labours, which I have published in this form for the use and information of the members and ex-members of the corps.

The standing orders I have compiled from the orders of several regular cavalry regiments, and have adapted them to the use of the Body Guard, and published them in connection with the Historical Record, to which, I feel, they will serve as a useful appendix.

FRED. C. DENISON.

RUSHOLME,

TORONTO, 29th March, 1876.

HISTORICAL RECORD

OF THE

Governor General's Body-Guard.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAR OF 1812 TO THE REBELLION OF 1837.

SOME time before the War of 1812 a Militia Law had been passed and a military organization of the population had been effected upon the basis of compulsory service of all the inhabitants of Upper Canada capable of bearing arms. The country was divided into regimental districts, and officers were appointed to command the militia in the different divisions. This organization of itself would have been of little avail, unless followed up by a certain amount of drill and instruction to both officers and men. To provide this to a certain extent, and to ensure a nucleus of drilled men in the least burdensome way to the people, a system was adopted of drilling two companies in each battalion, called the flank companies, and of filling these by volunteers where practicable, and completing the quota by the ballot where such a measure was

required. These flank companies were the first to march to the frontier on the declaration of war, those from Toronto, called "The York Volunteers," doing good service at Detroit, Queenston Heights and other fields. The flank companies, supported by the militia generally, and by a few auxiliary troops of cavalry organized by the British Government for the war, formed the main force of the Canadian Militia.

On the conclusion of the war the flank companies were disbanded, and the old organization in regimental divisions was retained; and in order to have a quota of cavalry engrafted on the system, it was arranged in 1822 in some districts to organize troops of cavalry to be attached to the infantry battalions, and to be under the command of the Lieut.-Colonels of them. In that year, therefore, Col. Chewett, who was in command of the 1st West York Regiment of Militia, being desirous of organizing a troop of cavalry in connection with his battalion, applied to Captain George T. Denison, of Bellevue, Toronto, then commanding a company in the 1st West York, who took upon himself the duty of raising one.

Captain Denison had served throughout the war of 1812 with much credit, and was considered the most available officer to undertake the duty, particularly as he was a good horseman, well acquainted with the farming community, and of an impetuous and energetic temperament. He selected Mr. Aaron Silverthorn, a farmer who lived in the neighbourhood of Toronto, as his lieutenant. Mr. Silverthorn had fought under General Brock

and had done good service during the whole continuance of hostilities, and was well qualified by his intelligence and energy for the position. Mr. Charles Richardson was appointed cornet.

Cornet Richardson, after serving some years in the troop, moved to the old town of Niagara, where he practised law for many years as a barrister.

In arranging the uniform of the new troop, it so chanced that a master-tailor of Her Majesty's 13th Light Dragoons, named Wedge, had just about that time left the regiment, and emigrated to York (now Toronto), where he had opened a tailoring establishment. This was too good an opportunity to be lost. Captain Denison at once decided upon adopting the 13th Light Dragoons as a model. The tailor was employed to make the necessary uniforms for officers and men, and in a short time the troop was fully supplied. From that accidental cause, the blue and buff uniform of the 13th Hussars became in time the uniform of the great body of cavalry of the Dominion of Canada. When the 13th Light Dragoons were changed to the 13th Hussars, the corps of cavalry in this country followed the change, and in the Fenian troubles, when that splendid regiment was sent to Canada, they found the Canadian cavalry dressed in their own familiar uniform.

The troop was drilled from time to time for many years, always being complimented for their spirited and patriotic conduct in going to so great an outlay and giving up so much time to drill without the slightest

remuneration ; and they were repeatedly promised by the Government that swords and pistols would be issued to them. So the troop went on for years, uniformed at their own cost, and drilling in field movements, without arms, until the rebellion of 1837 broke out.

When the remains of General Brock were removed to the Queenston Heights, Captain Denison did not neglect being present on the occasion to pay his last respects to the relics of that gallant officer. The *York Observer* of the 18th Oct., 1824, in describing the re-interment on the 13th of the same month, says : " We had the melancholy pleasure of attending, on Wednesday last, the removal of the mortal remains of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock and those of his deceased aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel McDonell, from Fort George to the monument at Queenston Heights. The day was remarkably fine. The persons who attended to pay this last tribute of respect to their memories were highly respectable and numerous. There could not be less than 10,000 persons present," &c., &c. The paper then goes on to give the order in which the procession was formed up ; following that of the " Officers of the West York Militia, under the command of Lieut-Col. Bakie," appears the name of " Captain Denison, of the York Dragoons."

In later years, when the new monument to General Brock was inaugurated, the troop was present on the occasion.

During the years from 1822 to 1837, the uniform of the corps was in the old style—a blue coat, with buff