

Rebellions of 1837-1838 Newspaper Collection, 1838

RG 780

Brock University Archives

- Creator:** Brock University
- Extent:** 1 oversized box
- Abstract:** The collection contains American and British newspapers published around the time of the Upper and Lower Canada rebellions in 1837-1838. Many of the issues report on the events of the rebellions. Relevant news items from each issue have been described, with special attention to events that occurred in Niagara.
- Materials:** Newspapers
- Repository:** Brock University Archives
- Finding aid:** Chantal Cameron
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Scope and Content

The collection contains American and British newspapers published around the time of the Upper and Lower Canada rebellions in 1837-1838. Many of the issues report on the events of the rebellions. Relevant news items from each issue have been described, with special attention to events that occurred in Niagara. Other articles of local interest concerning the War of 1812 or Welland Canal have also been noted.

Inventory

Albany Argus, Albany, [New York]

5 January 1838. Under the heading "Legislature of New York", a report by Gov. W.L. Macy stating that "*the territory of this state has been invaded and some of our citizens murdered, by an armed force from the Province of Upper Canada*". He then relates some of the details of the seizure of the *Caroline* by the British and the loss of American life, as well as the necessity of a military force for the protection of citizens. An article titled "From the Frontier" provides details of the *Caroline* affair including the uncertainty as to how many men were on board and their fate; a meeting at Lewiston about the events and the gathering of militia there and at Lockport; and speculation of an impending attack concerning Navy Island.

9 January 1838. The first page contains the speech of the Lieutenant Governor in Toronto on December 28, 1837; a circular to the citizens of Buffalo by Henry Rogers from the District Attorney's office and dated December 30, 1837; a letter by Col. McNab dated December 29, 1837 concerning reports of the British landing on Grand Island and the use of the *Caroline* by the pirates on Navy Island; and an account of the capture of the *Caroline* by the British. Page three contains news of activity on Navy Island, including an exchange of fire between the rebels and the British, the number of men and weapons on the island, and the expectation that the rebels would evacuate the island shortly.

12 January 1838. The first page contains an article on American Governor Marcy's refusal to surrender Mackenzie as a felon; cannonading between Navy Island and the Canadian shore; and Mackenzie's arrival in Buffalo with his wife and his subsequent arrest and release on \$5000 bail. The second page contains a proclamation by President Martin Van Buren instructing American citizens not to assist the Patriots; and proceedings from the House of Representatives on the situation on the Northern Frontier. Page three contains news of a report by E.P. Livingston regarding the *Caroline* affair.

19 January 1838. Page two contains news of the presence of Governor Marcy and General Scott in Buffalo; General orders from Col. McNab announcing the destruction of the *Caroline*; a report of "tremendous cannonading" at Navy Island; and the arrival of about 100 volunteers from Oswego, who brought provisions to Navy Island. A shipment of muskets bound for Navy Island was intercepted by the Americans and remained at Schlosser despite the rebels' attempts to take them by force.

26 January 1838. Page two contains a statement by Mr. Wells, proprietor of the steamboat *Caroline*; the fleeing of Canadian patriots to the United States; and the ordering of two hundred men to the district to help preserve peace and neutrality.

30 January 1838. The front page contains a letter from Niagara Falls dated January 22 reporting on the situation. The patriots have abandoned Navy Island but the British maintain a heavy military presence in Niagara, where they have *“double guards at the ferry, which they regulate according to their own views, permitting none to pass or repass, except such as pleasing to them”*. It is also mentioned that the Islanders returned the cannon to Schlosser. News from Detroit is reported on.

27 February 1838. Page two contains proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives regarding the preservation of peace on the frontier. Page three contains letters from Watertown and Ogdensburgh regarding the state of anxiety and excitement there.

2 March 1838. Page two addresses rumours of the movements of the Patriots, including a false report about the capture of the *Brockville* and the dispersal of the Patriots at French Creek. Page three contains news of the imprisonment of Wolfred Nelson for high treason, and a poem written by his wife titled *“The Patriot Chief”*.

6 March 1838. The first page contains news from the Northern frontier reporting that the state arsenal at Elizabethtown, Essex County, was broken into and rifles, muskets, pistols and other supplies taken. Also includes a report on despatches from Gen. Wool on the concentration of people, weapons, and equipment between Champlain and Plattsburgh; and reports of the events on Hickory Island, French Creek, and Watertown. The arsenal at Batavia was also broken into and muskets and powder were stolen. Page three reports on the disbanding of the invading forces, noting that *“the whole frontier, from St. Albans to Watertown, is entirely tranquilized—probably not to be again disturbed”*.

23 March 1838. The second page contains news of a report from *The Montreal Herald* that Papineau is in Albany and in contact with United States officials, preparing for a Canadian rebellion. The *Albany Argus* disputes this claim and states that Papineau has not been in the area for three weeks and was never in constant contact with U.S. officials.

13 April 1838. Page three contains a brief article on the fate of the Patriots. It is reported that Lount and Matthews were tried in Toronto and sentenced to death. John Anderson was convicted but had yet to be sentenced. The court martial for the trial of Sutherland was to assemble April 2. A notice by W.B. Robinson, Superintendent of the Welland Canal, states that the canal will open as soon as the ice is out of the harbours of Lake Erie, and notes the repair of the piers at Port Dalhousie.

24 April 1838. Page two contains news of the execution of Lount and Matthews in Toronto despite a petition by 3000 Toronto citizens calling for a stay; the upcoming executions of Theller, Montgomery, and Anderson; and Sutherland *“being used”* to save his dirty neck. Page three contains news of the banishment of Sutherland to New South Wales, the acquittal of Hunter, and execution of Lount.

1 June 1838. The first page contains an article on the northeastern boundary, with official documents of President Van Buren, Secretary of State John Forsyth and Foreign Minister of Great Britain H.S. Fox on the establishment of a joint commission for a survey of a conventional boundary. Page two notes that 54 of the Toronto prisoners have been discharged and that Charles Durand will be sent to the South Seas instead of being hanged.

22 June 1838. The first page addresses frontier rumours that the Patriots formed a camp in "Long Swamp", between Grand Island and Chippewa Creek. There is also a report of a seizure of Patriot weapons near Lewiston. A brief biography of Bill Johnson by Mackenzie is also included.

26 June 1838. Page three contains a letter from Niagara Falls about an engagement between the Patriots and the Queen's Lancers near Niagara. It is reported that the Patriots are situated in a swamp near the Welland Canal and that most of the leaders have left. There is brief mention made of an insurrection at Short Hills. There is also news that Sir John Colborne has stopped recruiting for the coloured regiment in the upper province and commanded that it be removed from the frontier, and that he has also disbanded the militia. Mr. Bouchette, a prisoner at Montreal, gave information on Mr. Papineau in the hopes of saving his own life.

29 June 1838. Page two contains details of a skirmish at Short Hills between the Queen's Lancers and the Patriots. There is also a letter from Lewiston dated June 21, 1838 providing particulars of the skirmish. Page three contains more details of the Short Hills affair, and information about a proclamation by Gov. Arthur requiring all persons going to or coming from the United States provide a full statement of business.

6 July 1838. Page two includes a letter clarifying the questions of free travel in and out of Canada by Americans, and a rumour of general amnesty being given to all political prisoners in Lower Canada.

13 July 1838. The first page contains a lengthy article on the Northeastern boundary and resolutions from the committee on foreign relations.

7 August 1838. The front page contains an article about Maj. Gen. Macomb and his visit to Plattsburgh, where he was honoured for his defence of the town in 1814 against the British. Page two contains an article about the escape of John G. Parker and other Patriot prisoners in the Fort of Kingston, who escaped to French Creek. The execution of Moreau is also mentioned. Page three contains a brief article on the recapture of J.G. Parker.

14 August 1838. Page two contains an article on sixteen persons sentenced to death for their part in the Short Hills affair. Four are Americans and twelve are British subjects. A commentary on the sentences is also included on the same page.

17 August 1838. The first page contains an article on the escape of the Kingston prisoners.

24 August 1838. The second page contains an article on the possible commutation of the sentences of the men convicted in the Short Hills affair.

21 December 1838. The first page contains a lengthy article on the trial of the patriot prisoners at Fort Henry.

25 December 1838. Page two contains an article on the suspension of Judges Bedard and Panet of Quebec after they decided the writ of habeas corpus could not be suspended by the existing legislative power of the province. This is followed by a list of the prisoners captured after the action at Windsor, near Sandwich, on December 4, 1838.

Bell's Weekly Messenger, London, England

18 February 1838. Contains reports on William Lyon Mackenzie's occupation of Navy Island with his supporters, the subsequent evacuation of the island, and his arrest in Buffalo. Coverage of the events begins on page two with news of the evacuation of Navy Island. It is reported that the rebels left the island and retreated to the American shore. A letter from Niagara Falls dated January 14 describes some of the activity before the island was evacuated. It is written that the British "*are anxious to avoid a war with this country—they are more anxious to have our authorities cut off supplies from the island...They will not attempt the island by assault, but expect to drive the Patriots—pirates they call them—from the island by their shells, rockets, and artillery*". Reports of cannonading from Chippewa are included. There is also a report on the arrest of William Lyon Mackenzie. It is stated that while in Buffalo with his ailing wife, Mackenzie was arrested "*on the charge of raising an armed force in this state for the invasion of a country with which we are at peace*". He was released on \$5000 bail. The arrest of Van Rensselaer, chief of the Patriot forces, is also noted.

Lockport Daily Bulletin, Lockport, [New York]

8 January 1838. Contains speculation about an attack on Navy Island, Canadian Tories firing on Americans on Goat Island, and a piece of artillery supposedly sent to Col. McNab from individuals at Niagara Falls.

9 January 1838. Contains news of cannonading between the Island and Canadian forces; the dispersal of Tory forces around Chippewa; a letter from Lt. J. Elmsley to Col. McNab reporting on firing at British forces from those on Navy Island; and a letter from Col. McNab to Jonas Jones reporting on the capture of the steamboat *Caroline* and the necessity of setting it on fire.

10 January 1838. Contains news of the Canadian militia dispersing from Chippewa; speculation that a drowned man found at the whirlpool is Angus McLeod; that the forces on Navy Island are growing; and that a man on Navy Island was killed by a cannon shot from the Canadian shore.

11 January 1838. Contains news of cannonading between the Patriots on Navy Island and the Tories in Canada; the arrival of 200 British Regulars at Queenston; the Tories firing on Americans at Goat Island and Lewiston; and a boat from the Canadian shore that was intercepted by armed boats from Navy Island and driven back to Chippewa.

12 January 1838. Contains news of Col. McNab of the Royal forces at Chippewa being superseded in command by Col. Hughes; cannonading between the Patriots and the Tories; and an account of the “confessions of the murderers”, being an account by McDonald or McDonough of the militia who claimed to be part of the group that attacked the steamboat *Caroline*.

13 January 1838. Contains news of a battle between those on Navy Island and the British on the Canadian shore. After a small spy-boat from the Canadian shore was shot at by the Patriots “*a most tremendous cannonading and bombarding were opened upon the Islanders from the Canadian batteries. Peal after peal thundered from their roaring artillery, and flash after flash sent up an almost uninterrupted sheet of lurid flame, for two or three hours duration. Bomb followed bomb, rocket followed rocket, and ball after ball, in such quick succession, and accompanied with such unearthly bellowing, that it seemed as though the very elements were at war...*”. The arrival of Major General Winfield Scott to take over command of the Frontier forces is mentioned.

15 January 1838. Contains news of the evacuation of Navy Island by the Patriots and speculation on where they have gone and what their plans are.

16 January 1838. Contains news of the arrest of Gen. Van Rensselaer and his release on \$5000 bail; speculation about the Patriot’s activities and location; British firing on the American steamboat *Barcelona*; and a notice from President Martin Van Buren about the posting of militia on the Niagara frontier.

17 January 1838. Contains news about the Canadian Royalists occupying Navy Island after it had been evacuated by the Patriots; comments by Col. McNab on the Caroline Affair; and refugee Patriots arriving in the United States.

18 January 1838. Contains news of American troops being sent to Buffalo in the event the British began hostilities after attacking the American steamboat *Barcelona*; the concentration of Patriot forces at the Indian reservation outside of Buffalo; the location of Gen. Van Rensselaer and McKenzie; and the movement of Canadian Royalists towards Detroit.

19 January 1838. Contains news of the arrival of 80 troops from New York City headed for the frontier, and accounts of Col. McNab’s role in the Caroline Affair.

20 January 1838. Contains news of 300 Patriots leaving the Indian Reservation; that Gen. Van Rensselaer and McKenzie were both in Buffalo; and an address from the members of the British Constitutional Society of Upper Canada to the citizens of the United States.

21 January 1838. Contains news about the regrouping of the Patriots; the movement of British troops towards Detroit to meet the Patriots; death of Col. Hughes; and the fortifying of Navy Island by the Tories.

23 January 1838. Contains news of the seizure of small arms supposedly belonging to the Patriots by Gen. Scott; a rumour about a citizen of Lockport being driven out of the city for refusing to recruit for the Navy Island army; and a poem titled *Navy Island*.

24 January 1838. Contains news of the activity near Detroit, and information about the steamboat *Caroline* and its activities provided by the proprietor, Mr. Wells, who claims it was never bought or chartered by the Navy Island patriots.

25 January 1838. Contains news of the calm at Buffalo and along the Niagara frontier; an attack on Malden by the Patriots; and comments on how the Caroline Affair is represented in Canadian newspapers.

26 January 1838. Contains news about Col. Hughes, who had been earlier reported deceased but was in fact alive and in command of the Royal forces.

27 January 1838. Contains a letter from Niagara Falls that reports that the Patriots have recruited more members since leaving Navy Island, that loyal forces are on the way to Malden to intercept Duncombe, and that 500 Patriots are on the way from Pittsburgh to Erie to join the enterprise. Also contains a notice about a meeting of the citizens of Niagara to be held at the Court House in Lockport *“to express the sentiments of the people of this county, on the subject of the invasion of our territory, the burning of the steamboat Caroline & the murder of our citizens at Schlosser, by the British Canadians”*.

29 January 1838. Contains news of the events at Detroit, including a report that the forces under Gen. Sutherland, or Duncombe, made an attack upon Sandwich (opposite Detroit) and liberated all of the Patriot prisoners confined there; the arrest of Gen. Sutherland by authorities of the State of Michigan; and the events of a meeting held at the Court House in Lockport to discuss the Caroline Affair.

30 January 1838. Contains news of between 2000 and 3000 Patriots marching from Malden to Hamilton; a letter by J.P. Miller to the Chairman of the Young Men’s Meeting, on behalf of the Canadian Patriots at the Court House in Montpelier, regarding the Caroline Affair.

31 January 1838. Contains reports of the descent of the Patriot forces into Canada, near Malden; and resolutions by the citizens of Richford, Vt., in response to the Caroline Affair.

1 February 1838. Contains news about the movements of the steamboat *New England* and the *Robert Fulton*.

2 February 1838. Contains news about the British scrutinizing those who cross the Niagara River from the American shore to the Canadian shore; the number and conditions of those imprisoned in the Toronto jail; and the resignation of Lt. Gov. Head.

3 February 1838. Contains news about the disbandment of the Patriot forces under Sutherland; outrage at the presentation of swords to Col. McNab and Captain Drew for their role in the Caroline Affair; and commentary on the Caroline Affair.

Maine Daily Journal, Augusta, [Me]

5 January 1838. Contains news of “The Canada War” on page 3, noting that “*Gov. Head passed up from Lewiston to Chippewa with thirty sleigh loads of men on Monday*” and that “*the Governor sent a flag of truce to Gen. Van Rensselaer, commanding him to leave Navy Island*”. Other news reported includes the construction of a battery by the British opposite Navy Island and its bombardment, attempts of the Canadians to land on Navy Island, and a proclamation by William Lyon Mackenzie offering land in Canada for service with the Patriot forces.

6 January 1838. Contains news about a rumour that the British had landed on Grand Island and subsequent investigations, and news of the British attack on the steamboat *Caroline*.

8 January 1838. Contains news about the steamboat *Caroline* and the uncertainty about casualties, as well as the escalating tensions between the U.S. and Canada. It is noted that “*nothing is heard of here today save the destruction of the Caroline. Public indignation at this act has reached a fearful pitch...the awful fate of her crew fills everyone with astonishment and horror—It being impossible to ascertain, with any accuracy, the names of those lost or saved, in this tragic affair...*”

9 January 1838. Contains more news about the destruction of the steamboat *Caroline*, including narratives of the affair taken from official statements sent to the Governor of New York.

10 January 1838. Contains news about a British attack on Navy Island. It is reported that the British made several attacks but were “*beaten off with great slaughter*”. It is also said that Gen. Veau Renssealaer had landed his forces in Chippewa and that “*the Patriot Flag was flying triumphantly in Upper Canada!*”

13 January 1838. Contains a proclamation by the President of the United States, Martin Van Buren. Van Buren reminds Americans to remain neutral in the affairs of Canada, stating that “*any persons who shall compromit the neutrality of this government by interfering in an unlawful manner with the affairs of the neighboring British Provinces will render themselves liable to arrest and punishment under the laws of the United States, which will be rigidly enforced...*” There are also reports about activity on Navy Island and Chippewa. A letter from Niagara Falls states that “*three regiments of our militia have been suddenly called here and two or three regiments to Buffalo, and everything around us wears the appearance of war. Never, I believe, was there a greater excitement than in this region—never were people more ready to give up all other business and take up arms.*”

15 January 1838. Contains a message from President Martin Van Buren about the posting of militia along the Niagara frontier. Also contains several diplomatic documents concerning the British attack upon the steamboat *Caroline*, including letters by J.R. Poinsett, Secretary of War, and John Forsyth.

18 January 1838. Contains an article referring to Col. McNab, the commanding officer at Chippewa, and his published account of the attack on the *Caroline*. It is noted that the attack was done by his orders and that McNab commended many of the men for their bravery. News from Buffalo notes that there were bills of indictment against those involved in the *Caroline* incident.

22 January 1838. Contains a lengthy article on neutrality between the United States and Canada, as well as an article on the cannonading at Navy Island.

19 March 1838. Contains the complete text of Maine Governor Edward Kent's speech on the North-Eastern Boundary on March 14, 1838.

Weekly Dispatch, London, England

8 April 1838. Contains reports on the movements on the Patriots in Canada. It is said that the patriots had assembled at Comstock's and that the British descended on their encampment, resulting in the surrender of the munitions and men. Further reports of Patriots assembling at French Creek and Alburgh and other places are included. Small pieces of paper along the fold line are missing and make reading the text difficult.