



Ridgeway: The American Fenian Invasion And The 1866 Battle That Made Canada (History of Canada)

Peter Vronsky

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In this groundbreaking narrative , historian, investigative journalist and filmmaker Peter Vronsky uncovers the hidden history of the Battle of Ridgeway and explores its significance to Canada's nation-building myths and traditions.

On June 1, 1866, more than 1,000 Fenian insurgents invaded Canada across the Niagara River from Buffalo, N.Y. The Fenians were mostly battle-hardened Civil War veterans; the Canadian troops sent to fight them came from a generation that had not seen combat at home for more than 30 years. Led by inexperienced upper-class officers, the volunteer soldiers were mostly young, some as young as 15 years old. They were farm boys, shopkeepers, apprentices, schoolteachers, store clerks and two rifle companies of University of Toronto students hastily called out from their final exams. Many had not fired live rounds from their rifles even once.

When they fought the Fenians near the village of Ridgeway the next day, a single rifle company of 28 students took the brunt of a counter-attack by 800 insurgents and suffered the most killed and wounded. The events of June 2, 1866, were covered up by the Macdonald government. The story was falsified so thoroughly that most Canadians today have not heard of the first modern battle in which Canadians died.

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