

THE GREEN AGAINST THE BRITISH RED: U.S. Rifle Regiments in the Northwestern Army

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When the War of 1812 began, the United States Regiment of Riflemen was already a force in being. The regiment had been created in 1808 in reaction to events in Europe. President Jefferson's request to increase the size of the armed forces noted the danger to the country "arising from the contests of other nations".¹ In response to the President's call, Congress voted to expand the regular army in order to garrison new seacoast fortifications and to protect the recently acquired Louisiana Territory.

Congress increased both the army's conventional and unconventional capabilities. The addition of five infantry regiments resulted in a total of seven regiments. For less conventional operations, Congress authorized three regiments of light troops: the Regiment of Riflemen, a Regiment of Light Dragoons, and a Regiment of Light Artillery; each theoretically capable of moving quickly over great distances and taking the war to the enemy.² The rifle companies were not large; each consisted of four officers, two cadets, eight non-commissioned officers, two musicians, and 68 privates. Seldom did the companies reach their authorized strength.

Three companies of the rifle regiment were raised in New York and Vermont; three more in the Louisiana and Mississippi Territories; and four came from Ohio, Kentucky, and the Indiana Territory. These recruiting areas reflected the Administration's view that the most likely threats would come from Canada, the western frontier, or the Gulf coast.

The rifle regiment, an acknowledgment of the rifle units of Wayne's Legion and those of the Revolution, combined discipline, organization, and firepower with unconventional tactics. Dressed in unique green uniforms and carrying short-barreled rifles, the regiment's role was to observe, to harass, and to skirmish with the enemy. Riflemen were trained to move quickly, fire accurately, and act semi-independently. They were intended to skirmish in wooded terrain and could operate either by themselves, in cooperation with other rifle companies, or, as at Fort Erie, in support of conventional operations. In combat, the riflemen would break ranks and seek cover rather than standing erect exposed to enemy fire. Although firsthand accounts of rifle operations are rare, a post war manual described what was expected of each rifleman. "The first is to be enabled to make a shot that will take effect; and the second to make that shot without being discovered."³

Despite its expansion in 1808, the army was small, underfunded and overworked. The Rifles were an adjunct to the infantry regiments, serving primarily along the frontier and the seacoast. In 1810, for example, well over half of the regiment's officers and men were stationed in either New Orleans or the Mississippi Territory.⁴ Those riflemen who served on the frontier performed a variety of military and constabulary missions. Duties ranged from enforcing laws governing trade with the Creeks to prohibiting white settlement in treaty lands and keeping watch on the Spanish in Florida and a wary eye on the Prophet and his allies in the western territories. If

stationed at coastal fortifications, the riflemen were intended to oppose the enemy's landing parties.

It was rare when more than two rifle companies served together; most were dispersed at small outposts in detachment-sized elements. At Highwassie, Tennessee, in 1813, Captain Hayes' detachment consisted of fifteen men.⁵ A report written after the war noted that rifle companies were not only "disposed by Companies, the natural consequence of their occupying so extensive a Depart' but they have also been employed on fortifications & other incessant tho' indispensable fatigue duty."⁶

The War Department provided little training guidance for the regiment. Commanders drilled and trained their men according to standard infantry manuals, realizing that the riflemen had to understand the maneuvers of the regular infantry. Von Steuben's, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, although silent on the use of riflemen, remained useful to teach traditional drill. William Duane, the regiment's first commander, privately published, *A Handbook for Riflemen* in 1812 that saw some use within the regiment, but the United States did not adopt a drill manual specifically for the rifle troops until after the war. The regimental commander issued orders on the subject: "There being no established system of guard & police duty the Regulations of Baron De Stuben will be the guide while the undersigned has the honor to command."⁷ One unique addition to their training regimen, though, was the incorporation of marksmanship, with liquor rewards given to the best marksman.⁸

By the time of the declaration of war, the Regiment of Riflemen had some campaign experience. A company of riflemen under Lieutenant Abraham Hawkins had fought at Tippecanoe in 1811. Additionally, two other companies under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Smith were then serving on an extended operation along the Georgia/Florida border.⁹ However, most riflemen had seen little active service.

Smith was promoted to Colonel in July 1812 and assumed command of the regiment. By then war had been declared and an American army was marching to Detroit. Smith disliked duty in the South – he felt it was a sideshow to the main effort - and particularly objected to the War Department's practice of fielding individual companies and detachments rather than the entire regiment. If he could not concentrate all his companies and serve as its commander in the field, he at least wanted to go to the main theater of operations with as many riflemen as possible. "If it is not intended that the Regiment of Riflemen should be embodied I request permission to join the Northern or North western army with such portion of it as intended to act in that quarter", he wrote the Adjutant General in 1813.¹⁰

Smith was not alone in his desire for active duty. Captain James McDonald at Fort Hampton, in modern day Alabama, felt the same way. "I should like to have an opportunity to try the green against the British red," he wrote the War Department in September 1812.¹¹ McDonald repeated his request six months later. "We are extremely anxious to participate with our brethren in arms on the field of honor and danger, we should be happy to receive orders to join the North Western army with two as fine companies as ever took the tented field."¹² Writing from the Illinois Territory, Captain Thomas Ramsey whose detachment guarded public stores at Fort Russell also

asked the Secretary of War to be “employed [sic] on more active duty” and volunteered to recruit a company of riflemen in Ohio where he had many friends and acquaintances.¹³

Captain Henry R. Graham was a recruiting officer at Washington, Kentucky, when he received orders to report to Smith in Milledgeville, Georgia, in December 1812 to continue on the recruiting service. He had been a rifle captain since 1809 and, like his contemporaries, Graham looked forward to commanding a company in the field. Graham bristled at the order to go to Georgia; he was currently recruiting a company in Kentucky that he hoped to lead on campaign. He argued that the “the northern army is in a much more active state” and predicted he could have a full company recruited by 1 March if he could remain in Kentucky. He outlined the distribution of his recruits to illustrate his success at recruiting: twenty-four to Captain Ramsey at Fort Russell; eleven sent to Newport, Kentucky; twelve were at Washington, Kentucky; four had deserted; and one was a horse thief who had been given up to the authorities. Graham also noted he had sufficient rifle clothing for a company-sized unit although he lacked arms and equipment. Graham closed his letter with a threat to resign to become a volunteer aide to General Harrison.¹⁴

The loss of Detroit and setbacks along the Niagara Frontier alarmed the Administration and, in reaction, the War Department undertook recruiting the rifle regiment to its full strength, appointing junior officers to help with recruiting operations. Smith had earlier complained to the War Department about his lack of subalterns and the disasters of 1812 forced the Administration to address the issue.¹⁵ At first Smith did not know what to do with his new subalterns. “I have been at a loss what orders to give the newly appointed officers of my Regt. who have been ordered to report to me and who are without commands,” he wrote. “I have made a full company for captain Massias from the two reported in Florida, leaving a small Detachment at Camp Pinckney ... under the command of captain Appling.”¹⁶

Smith was not then officially aware that this increase in subalterns was the first step in the War Department’s planned expansion of the rifle regiment, although he probably suspected it. In a letter to soon-to-be-promoted Captain Benjamin Forsythe at Sackett’s Harbor, the Adjutant General explained the Administration’s plans for the regiment for 1813. The government intended to post three rifle companies on the northern frontier. Captains Morgan’s and Ridgeway’s company of about 50 men each would be ordered to join Captain Smyth’s company in New York under Major Forsythe.¹⁷ A subsequent letter to the Commissary General of Purchases, Calendar Irvine, provided additional details of the government’s plan. “Of the rifle regiment, Captain Forsythe is at Ogdensburg with one hundred & fifty men & Captain Morgan’s company, 50 strong and the same number from Shepherds Town (Virginia) will be ordered to join him ... Colonel Thomas A. Smith is at St. Mary’s in Georgia with five captains and about one hundred & twenty men. Lt. Colonel Sevier with two captains and about one hundred & sixty men at Highwassie and Fort Hampton on Tennessee river, and it is contemplated to order Colonel Smith to complete seven companies in Tennessee & the three southern states for these captains.”¹⁸

The Adjutant General alerted Lieutenant Colonel George Sevier, deputy commander of the rifle regiment and commander of the recruiting district of East Tennessee, to expect Colonel Smith’s arrival at Knoxville to raise the additional companies. In January 1813, Sevier received instructions to recruit 200 men for the Regiment of Riflemen from his district.

As for the rest of the regiment, Morgan's and Ridgeway's companies passed through Baltimore on their way to join Major Forsythe in New York, collecting Lieutenant Swearingen and his Virginia recruits along the way. Once in New York, Ridgeway began recruiting for the regiment while Morgan and Smith joined Forsythe in the field. In the south, Captain Massias' company remained stationed at Point Petre, Georgia, while Captain Patterson convalesced in South Carolina suffering from a leg injury that ultimately proved fatal.¹⁹

Because the Regiment of Riflemen recruited in several states and territories, Smith could not personally superintend the recruitment of his regiment and, in compliance with War Department directions, ordered his recruiting officers to Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the western territories to recruit under the supervision of non-rifle officers. As the Adjutant General explained, "the placing of officers of different corps under the same superintendence seems indispensable."²⁰ In Ohio, for example, Captain Ramsey reported to Colonel John Miller of the 19th Regiment, United States Infantry, who commanded all recruiting operations in that state. Recruits, funds, and clothing for the Regiment of Riflemen were forwarded to Ramsey through Miller in Chillicothe. The main western rendezvous point for the regiment, however, was at Washington, Kentucky, with another rendezvous point in Limestone, Kentucky.²¹

In early July 1813, the War Department ordered Lieutenant Colonel Sevier to collect the riflemen in his district and the recruits from the 24th Regiment of Infantry and march them to the Rapids of the Maumee River to support General Harrison.²² Sevier began assembling the riflemen, but noted to the Adjutant General that arms were lacking. "I have received from Highwassie sixty-two stand of rifles which are all that kind of arm in the district and unless such shall soon arrive, some of the troops of that corps will have to march unarmed."²³ Captain Graham, also ordered to the Rapids with his soldiers, reported that his recruits had never been issued arms, accouterments, or camp equipage.²⁴

By late August, Sevier had completed his preparations, prompting the Adjutant General to remark that the Regiment of Riflemen mustered more than its complement of men.²⁵ In September 1813, Colonel Smith traveled to Fort Seneca in Ohio in advance of the main body. The riflemen, amounting to a battalion under Major James McDonald, left Nashville in early September, but arrived too late to accompany Harrison's main force in the invasion of Canada. Upon the riflemen's arrival, Colonel Smith notified the Army's Inspector General that he had collected 520 men from his regiment and "would procure transportation" to join Harrison in Canada.²⁶

Smith and his battalion of riflemen crossed over to Canada too late to engage in the Thames campaign. The Regiment of Rifles served briefly at Amherstburg when Harrison assigned Smith and his riflemen to Duncan McArthur's brigade and ordered the combined force to Buffalo to reinforce the army along the Niagara frontier. Smith reorganized his regiment into five companies under Captains Richard H. Graham, Daniel Appling, Joshua Hamilton, and Michael C. Hayes. Captain Frank Hampton of the 24th Regiment, United States Infantry, commanded the fifth company. Major McDonald served as the Regiment's mustering and inspection officer. The riflemen arrived at Buffalo on 24 October 1813 on board the schooner, *Ariel*. After serving briefly along the Niagara Frontier, Smith assumed command of the post at Sackett's Harbor in

December 1813. His riflemen were assigned to General Gaines at French Mills who wrote Smith telling him his “Rifle boys” were fine, active fellows and he regretted that there were so few of them.²⁷

While Sevier had been assembling the troops for the Rapids, Captain Thomas Ramsey received orders to recruit a company of riflemen in Ohio. In late June 1813, the Adjutant General directed Ramsey, then at Fort Massac, to transfer most of his men to the 1st Infantry Regiment. He, with a sergeant, a corporal, and four privates, was directed to proceed to Cincinnati to begin recruiting for the Regiment of Riflemen. Ramsey established a recruiting rendezvous in Urbana and remained in Ohio until mid-1814. Transferred to the Niagara frontier, Ramsey was wounded at Fort Erie and remained on convalescent leave until 1815.²⁸

The movement of the original Regiment of Riflemen as well as most of the regular infantry regiments to the east decreased the federal presence on the frontier. In the Northwest, militia levies, U.S. rangers, and detachments from the short-term 26th, 27th, and 28th Infantry Regiments, filled much of that void. By the end of 1813 though, the impending expiration of the one-year infantry regiments’ terms of service prompted Congress to reorganize the Army and consider an increase in the number of rifle regiments, believing that light infantry units were uniquely suited for frontier service. For western defense, Secretary of War John Armstrong felt the government should “employ western men, accustomed to the rifle and the forest, and not unacquainted with the usage and strategies of Indian warfare”.²⁹

The Secretary of War originally planned to add an additional four rifle regiments to the military establishment to create a rifle brigade of five regiments.³⁰ In anticipation of this expansion, President Monroe nominated, and the Senate approved, Smith for promotion to brigadier general on 21 January 1814. Although Congress subsequently reduced the number of additional rifle regiments from four to three, Smith retained his general officer rank. The Act of 10 February 1814 authorized three regiments of which the 2nd Rifle Regiment was to be raised in Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky, with rendezvous points at Chillicothe, Nashville, and Lexington. The length of service for the rifle regiments was for five years unless sooner discharged.

Smith learned of the increase in rifle regiments through newspaper sources. Smith wrote Thomas Telfair, the Georgia representative to Congress, and recommended three serving officers for appointments in the new regiments stating, “If the appointments are to be made from the present Army, better selections cannot be made ...”³¹ None of the officers Smith recommended, though, had rifle experience.

In late March, the War Department wrote Smith telling him that the Department had received “unfavorable” information concerning some of his officers and directed him to report their qualifications.³² The Secretary also asked who Smith felt was worthy of promotion. It’s likely Secretary of War John Armstrong wanted to promote experienced officers from the existing rifle regiment into senior leadership positions within the new rifle regiments. Smith’s reply was not flattering to his three senior captains: Graham, Massias, and Ridgeway. Graham, he said, was dissipated; Massias was feeble; and Ridgeway was totally unfit for any grade in the army. Smith recommended Captains Morgan and Appling for promotion and included promotable Lieutenant Edmund Shipp as also worthy of a majority.³³

Command of the 2nd Rifle Regiment went to Anthony Butler who would later gain notoriety as the United States chargé d'affaires in Mexico City. Butler, a Kentuckian, was former commander of the one-year 28th Regiment of Infantry raised in that state, and was then serving as garrison commander at Detroit. He assumed command of the regiment in April 1814. Almost immediately, William Henry Harrison, the Eighth Military District commander of which the 2nd Rifle Regiment was a part, ordered Butler to Lexington to superintend recruiting the regiment. Butler looked forward to the assignment, confident that his contacts in Kentucky and Tennessee would assist in his recruiting efforts. Upon arrival in Kentucky, Butler soon encountered a situation that would plague him throughout his tenure: too few recruiting officers. Butler wrote the Acting Adjutant General, Major John R. Bell, and requested that his senior officers - Lieutenant Colonel George Croghan, Majors David Gwynne and William Puthuff - be ordered to join him. He also sought transfers to the regiment for many current and former officers of the 17th, 19th, 24th, and 28th Infantry Regiments. In September, Butler noted that in addition to seven vacancies in the regiment, five of his officers were at Detroit waiting assignment orders to report for recruiting service; Captain Shipp was serving as Brigade Major on Brigadier General Smith's staff in upstate New York; and Lieutenant George Kennerly was thought to be on duty in the Missouri Territory.

Butler continually forwarded names to the War Department to fill the many vacancies, but with little success. In September, the War Department notified Butler that no promotions and only a few appointments would be made "for some time" as a result of Secretary Armstrong's resignation and the disordered condition of the War Department after the British had burned the capitol.³⁴

The officers he did have, though, came from a variety of sources; some from regiments either consolidated or eliminated during the Army's restructuring in 1814 and some commissioned directly from civilian life. None had rifle experience. Major Puthuff outlined the sources of the regiment's leadership, with most coming from the infantry regiments, one transferring from the 1st Regiment of Light Dragoons, and eleven officers commissioned into the regiment directly from civilian life.³⁵

Butler assigned Lieutenant Colonel George Croghan to oversee recruiting operations in Kentucky and Major David Gwynne to supervise recruiting operations in Tennessee. In Ohio, he placed Major William H. Puthuff, a Pickaway County resident and former captain in the 26th Infantry Regiment, in charge of recruiting at Chillicothe. As Puthuff noted, the regiment was "scatter'd over a considerable extent of country."³⁶ In April, Puthuff began actively recruiting for the regiment. His first duty was to collect his subordinate recruiters. He posted a notice in the Chillicothe newspaper, *The Fredonian*, instructing "those gentlemen who have received and accepted appointments in the Regiment with instructions to report to me at Chillicothe ... are requested to do so."

In June Butler wrote Washington expressing disappointment in the recruiting efforts, noting "our regiment is filling very slowly." A month later, he reported that he had enlisted at Newport some British prisoners of war to serve as buglers, but remained hopeful that he would have a battalion recruited by the end of July. Butler was very candid when he described the cause of the poor

turnout. In Tennessee, Gwynne competed with recruiting parties from the 1st and 3rd Rifle Regiments, the 7th, 24th, 39th, and 44th Regiments of Infantry, and numerous militia call ups. Butler threatened to remove Gwynne from the state because so many recruiting parties had scoured the state.³⁷ In Ohio, Puthuff faced similar obstacles. Despite using such well known, local personages like Croghan and Puthuff, recruiting efforts for the regiment barely achieved 200 rank and file by the end of 1814.³⁸

Butler naturally wanted his entire regiment to participate in the 1814 campaign season and in late summer, it looked as though he might get his wish. General McArthur ordered him to organize the regiment's recruits into companies and march them by way of Franklinton to Lower Sandusky under a major's command. To Butler's chagrin, the size of the force did not justify a colonel in command.³⁹

McArthur did not initially tell Butler where the riflemen's final destination would be, but he confided to Butler that the Secretary of War had ordered him to command an expedition into Upper Canada. In a subsequent letter, the general ordered Butler to march his troops to the "northern lines" to protect Detroit and Malden while McArthur's expedition was on campaign.⁴⁰ Butler was no doubt disappointed to realize that his regiment was destined for garrison duty and not on a foray into Upper Canada. Butler had previously noted to the Secretary of War that Detroit was a quiet post and the officers there would be better employed on the recruiting service.

He replied to McArthur from his cantonment near Lexington in late September stating that many of his soldiers were recovering from measles. "To compel a march at this season to the climate where they are destined may be attended inevitably with a filling of the hospital and consigning to the grave". He added the recruits were destitute of winter clothing and thinly supplied with summer uniforms."⁴¹

Two companies were then forming in Ohio: one under Captain Batteal Harrison and the other under Lieutenant John Stockton. The Ohio detachments under Harrison and Stockton had more success recruiting soldiers than the rest of the regiment, possibly because Andrew Jackson's call for troops from Kentucky and Tennessee had depleted the manpower pool in those states. On 5 July, Harrison, at Chillicothe, drew rations for twelve men and one woman. Two weeks later, the number of men had increased to nineteen. On 10 September, Harrison drew rations for 35 men and one woman and within a week he drew rations for nineteen additional men. By 3 October, Harrison and Stockton had 104 men with five women on the ration.

Despite this modest success, Butler again acknowledged the difficulty in acquiring enough recruits to fill the rest of the regiment. "I am extremely mortified that the monthly returns of the Second Riflemen exhibit so little promise of a Regiment to act during the present campaign."⁴² He again lamented the fact that he had so few recruiters and chided the War Department for not ordering more officers to report for recruiting duty. Butler also hinted that recruiters from other regiments had stolen rifle recruits by falsely passing themselves off as recruiters for the 2nd Rifle Regiment. In October, the War Department responded to Butler's complaints and ordered all officers in the 2nd Regiment of Riflemen on the recruiting service.⁴³

Butler had another concern besides insufficient numbers of recruits. The regiment had neither rifles nor accouterments. He wrote the Inspector General in July 1814 asking when he could expect to receive arms for his regiment and wondered if the rifles would have bayonets as in the British army.⁴⁴ At the time, there seemed to be very few rifles available for issue. A return of ordnance and ordnance stores dated 8 June 1814 lists 50 serviceable U.S. Horseman's or jaeger rifles and 8 shot pouches on hand at Fort Meigs. At Lower Sandusky, another report lists 38 rifles and 42 pouches and horns. At Franklinton, the primary place of deposit for ordnance and ordnance stores in Ohio, the storekeeper reported large quantities of rifle accessories: wipers, bullet molds, chargers, powder horns, and bullet pouches, but no rifles.⁴⁵

Within two months, the situation had improved. William C. Lyman, Assistant Deputy Commissary of Ordnance, reported 101 rifle cartridge boxes and belts; 400 bullet pouches; 637 rifle bullet molds, 333 rifle powder horns, 264 rifle chargers, and 597 serviceable rifles on hand. McArthur notified Butler of the "500 US rifles at Franklinton" and told Butler that if the necessary accouterments were available at either Lexington or Newport, he was to forward them to Ohio. He also authorized Butler to hire leather workers in Chillicothe to make additional cartridge boxes.⁴⁶

As Harrison and Stockton marched from Chillicothe towards Camp Harrison near Franklinton, Harrison received instructions to detach a sufficient number of his men to Urbana and there provide escort for "5 or 6 thousand Hogs". Harrison's men remained in Urbana for several weeks, effectively delaying their departure to Detroit until after the New Year.⁴⁷

In early November, Butler notified McArthur of a detachment on its way to Ohio from Kentucky under Captain John O'Fallon with 92 men and four women. Later that month, Benjamin Desha's detachment consisting of all the remaining rifle recruits arrived in Ohio from Kentucky. Desha absorbed Lieutenant Stockton's detachment and assumed command of the consolidated company. Aware of McArthur's planned mounted expedition through Upper Canada, Butler recommended that they be ordered on immediately to Detroit. Butler also expressed a desire to escape the "dullness of the recruiting service" and leave behind the frustrations of recruiting. Butler closed his letter noting that Desha's riflemen had marched from Kentucky wearing "the Infantry clothing at this place."⁴⁸

Neither Harrison, Desha, nor any of the riflemen reached Detroit before the end of the war. On 21 December, Desha was in Franklinton and Harrison was still in Urbana waiting to escort provisions.⁴⁹ Butler escaped the recruiting service when Brigadier General McArthur ordered him to assume command of Fort Shelby in Detroit in early 1815. Concurrently, the War Department discarded the geographic recruiting boundaries for the riflemen. In January 1815 the War Department declared that recruiting for all rifle regiments was "at large".⁵⁰ Butler, Puthuff, and three companies of the 2nd Rifle Regiment under the command of Captains Desha, Harrison, and O'Fallon (about 300 men) arrived in Detroit and Amherstburg in early February 1815 to replace the militia units there whose time of service had expired.⁵¹

Captain John O'Fallon, the regiment's mustering and inspecting officer, reviewed Desha's company in January at Chillicothe and noted that Desha had a full complement of men: one

captain, one first lieutenant, three third lieutenants, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians, and 85 privates.⁵²

O'Fallon again inspected Desha's company in April 1815 where both their companies were at Amherstburg serving as garrison soldiers. He reported that discipline within the company was "tolerably good", but that clothing was defective in both quality and quantity; coats had not yet been received. The company's arms were in "great want of repair, but clean". Captain Desha, he wrote, was an officer of much promise; the first lieutenant, an officer of the finest material, but unfortunately for himself and the Army sometimes indiscreet." The remaining officers were also officers of great promise, "their merits are perhaps not surpassed by any of their grade in the army."⁵³

In contrast, Captain Harrison's company did not receive such favorable reviews. O'Fallon noted that discipline was "extremely loose" in the company and the rifles were "out of repair and in bad condition for want of cleanliness". O'Fallon felt that Harrison was a good officer, but First Lieutenant Swearingen "wants capacity". The first Third Lieutenant was attentive, but the second Third Lieutenant was "rather dull". The non-commissioned officers and privates were also "of the finest material, but wanted discipline to be presentable."⁵⁴

O'Fallon also inspected his own company. Perhaps not too surprisingly, he gave his unit high marks for those aspects under his immediate control. He rated Discipline within his company as "Excellent or the best in the District as admitted by officers of military judgment". He evaluated his weapons as "much impaired", but noted that they were clean. In terms of his personnel, he reported that the First Lieut. Is "a good officer as is the Third Lieut. This remark is quite applicable to the Ensign." His non-commissioned officers were of a "superior cast" and the private soldiers of "good material". O'Fallon was less complimentary on those things outside his control. He noted that the provisions were of bad quality, the clothing was very defective with his men "almost naked", and his accouterments "not complete".⁵⁵

The original Regiment of Rifles and later the 2nd Rifle Regiment suffered periodic uniform shortages similar to the rest of the army. Captain Ramsey complained about uniform shortages for his detachment at Fort Russell throughout the winter of 1812 and 1813. He received uniforms in mid-summer 1813, after he had transferred his soldiers to the 1st Infantry Regiment. In March 1812, Captain Graham, at Washington, Kentucky, received 78 rifle frocks for his recruits as part of his semi-annual uniform issue. In February, 1813, Colonel Miller at Chillicothe received a sizeable shipment of summer uniform items, fringed frocks, blankets, and bugle horns. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel McMillan received a similar shipment at Newport.⁵⁶

In 1814, at the time the 2nd Regiment was forming, the Army changed the winter uniform for the rifle regiments. Grey coats and trousers replaced the green and black coats first authorized in 1808. The uniform of 1814 consisted of: "A short coat of grey cloth, single breasted ... one row of ten buttons in front ... a waistcoat of grey cloth with sleeves of the same ... Pantaloon of grey cloth. Leather caps with a short green pompom in front. On all occasions they are permitted to wear the uniform of the artillery, except as to buttons"⁵⁷

Callendar Irvine, the Commissary General of Purchases, recommended to the Adjutant General that the older style, light weight linen frocks and trousers be issued to the 2nd Rifle Regiment as their summer uniform, noting he had several thousand in stock. For their winter issue, he added that he had “one thousand green coats on hand, and some cloth vests and overalls, wool,” as well, suggesting that they, too, should be issued until the stocks were exhausted.⁵⁸ The Adjutant General agreed and, accordingly, the regiment received the older style uniforms in addition to the newer patterns.

Irvine forwarded the summer uniforms to the regimental rendezvous as directed. In July 1814, the Office of the Military Storekeeper in Philadelphia sent out the woolen winter uniforms to the two rendezvous posts in Lexington and Chillicothe. Irvine wrote Puthoff that “kersey jackets with sleeves, in lieu of vests, are to be issued.” Puthoff received several hundred wool coats and grey overalls for the recruiting service shortly afterwards. Inspection reports indicate that the regiment received both old and new style winter uniforms: O’Fallon’s company had coats, while Harrison’s company had jackets.⁵⁹

During the first half of 1815, the small force of regulars and militia, to include the Rifles, was barely adequate to maintain order in Detroit and the surrounding area. Duty for those in the Detroit area included not only the fatigue details and guard mounts typical of all garrisons, but also rebuilding the fortifications at Fort Shelby and Amherstburg. Patrols rarely ranged farther than 3 or 4 miles from the garrison. In early July, the riflemen evacuated Amherstburg when the British assumed control of the post in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Ghent.

With the end of the war, the four rifle regiments down sized into a single regiment; once again designated the Regiment of Riflemen. Recruiting operations had ceased for all practical purposes in December and the officers on recruiting duty were ordered to join their regiments. The Army discharged most of the officers of the 2nd Rifle Regiment, to include Butler, Puthuff, Desha, Harrison, and Gwynne. Puthuff, however, became the Indian Agent at Michilimackinac and Croghan received a transfer to the 1st Infantry Regiment. He resigned in 1817 and was later appointed the Army’s Inspector General. O’Fallon was also retained in the downsized army although he resigned in 1818.

Despite its non-existent combat record, the 2nd Rifle Regiment’s short tenure provides some interesting insights. The authorization for three additional rifle regiments in 1814 occurred at a time when the war’s outcome was uncertain. It is possible the additional rifle regiments were created as a Congressional attempt to replicate the tactical and morale-boosting successes of the 1st Rifle Regiment in New York and elsewhere during 1813. But it’s unlikely the successes of a few rifle companies provided sufficient justification for Congress to appropriate funds for raising and equipping three additional rifle regiments. More likely, Congress authorized the additional regiments because of the 1st Rifle Regiment’s experiences in irregular operations before the war, believing rifle companies were best suited for the type of campaigning envisioned along the fringes of the Republic. These new rifle regiments would not only free up regular infantry regiments to support operations elsewhere, but would also protect American interests against Indian and foreign threats along the frontier.

Regardless, by the time Congress authorized the regiment's creation in 1814, conditions had changed in Ohio and the Northwest. The Battle of the Thames had reduced the Indian threat to manageable levels and the main theaters of war had moved elsewhere. Many potential recruits recognized that fact even if Congress did not and declined to volunteer despite generous bounties and entitlements. With too few infantry regiments resulting from the Army's reorganization in 1814, there was little the under strength 2nd Rifle Regiment could do except perform garrison duties at Detroit and Malden.⁶⁰

Internally, the 2nd Rifle Regiment suffered from inexperienced leadership. The officers Congress appointed to the 2nd Regiment came from either disbanded infantry units or from civilian life. They were essentially political appointees unfamiliar with the unique capabilities and characteristics of a rifle regiment. Butler's comments to the Secretary of War show his unfamiliarity with rifle tactics in North America. "Without bayonets or pike men our light troops are surely not placed upon an equality with the light troops of Europe", he wrote.⁶¹ Butler overlooked the fact that his men carried both tomahawks and knives should his riflemen find themselves in a close combat situation. And, unlike the 4th Regiment of Rifles which benefitted from a close relationship with the 1st Rifle Regiment, the 2nd Regiment enjoyed no such mentoring relationship and could not learn from other's experiences.

Popular histories generally credit the 1st Rifle Regiment as providing an early precedent for modern special operations units. There is some validity to that assertion, but direct action – raids, reconnaissance patrols, and ambushes - is only one aspect of special operations forces. The distinguishing characteristic of special operations is its ability to provide support to civil authorities and conduct operations with and against local tribes, militias, and other ethnicities.

If there is any legacy associated with the 2nd Regiment's brief existence, it is in this capacity. During the first six months of 1815, Colonel Butler, backed by the three companies of riflemen, served as the military assistant to William Woodbridge, the acting governor of the Michigan Territory. Butler's duties involved ensuring fair trade with the Indians, maintenance of civil order, re-establishing trade between Upper Canada and the Northwest Territory, and completing the transfer of Malden and Michilimackinac. In that sense, the significance of the 2nd Rifle Regiment's was not as a tactical unit, but as a diplomatic one.

¹ *American State Papers*, 5, *Military Affairs* 1, 227.

² After the Revolution, Timothy Pickering recommended that the regular army garrison frontier posts while the light infantry and the dragoons patrolled the areas in between. Even though his recommendations were not initially accepted, Congress later on essentially adopted his plan. For example, in late 1808, Secretary of War Dearborn ordered all light artillery, light dragoons, and riflemen south of New Jersey to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast as a demonstration of the mobility inherent in light troops. The most well-known of the units so ordered, Peter's company of light artillery, left Baltimore that month completely mounted and equipped and arrived in New Orleans via Pittsburg in March 1809.

³ J.G. Dyckman, *American Militia Officer's Manual, being a complete and concise system of instruction for infantry, field and horse artillery, cavalry and riflemen*. (New York: N.B. Holmes, 1825), 154.

⁴ Of the Regiment's reported strength of 567 officers and men, 356 were in the southern and western United States. The rest were stationed along the eastern seaboard or in upstate New York. *American State Papers*, 5, *Military Affairs* I, 251-3.

⁵ Servier to Adjutant and Inspector General, Knoxville, 12 August 1813, National Archives (NA), RG 94, Records of the Office of the Adjutant General, M566, Roll 31.

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- ⁶ “Report of Inspection of the Ninth Military Department, 1819”, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1920), 261-274.
- ⁷ Detachment Orders, 7 January 1814, Sackett’s Harbor. Thomas Adams Smith Papers, Microfilm Reel 2, State Historical Society of Missouri.
- ⁸ Regimental Order, 31 October 1812, Newark, NA, RG 98, Records of US Army Commands, Entry 367, *Orderly Book for the Company of Captain Thomas Ramsey, 1813 to 1815*.
- ⁹ Smith had with him in Florida about 140 men. Fielder Ridgeway to Eustis, Camp before Augustine, 14 August 1812, Accessed 12 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>. See also, James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812, the Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida*, (University Press of Florida, 2003).
- ¹⁰ Smith to Cushing, Washington, GA, 20 April 1813. In mid-summer, Captain Benjamin Forsythe received orders for Sackett’s Harbor. Accessed 12 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ¹¹ McDonald to Cushing, Fort Hampton, 1 September 1812. Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ¹² McDonald to Cushing, Fort Hampton, 5 March 1813, Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ¹³ Ramsey to SW, Fort Russell, 30 April 1813, Accessed 12 May 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ¹⁴ Graham to Cushing, 13 December 1812, Washington, KY, Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ¹⁵ “[T]he two companies of riflemen with me are one without subalterns, the other has but one. I have repeatedly reported this to the War Department without it being remedied.” Smith to Flournoy, 7 November 1812 as cited in John C. Frederiksen, *Green Coats and Glory, The United States Regiment of Riflemen, 1808-1821*. (Fort Niagara Publications, Youngstown, New York: 2000),
- ¹⁶ Smith to Pinckney, 26 March 1813, Point Petre, Smith Papers.
- ¹⁷ Smyth to Forsythe, 7 December 1812, NA, RG 94, M565, Roll 4.
- ¹⁸ Smyth to Irvine, 19 December 1812, M565, Roll 4)
- ¹⁹ Patterson’s presence in South Carolina deprived Smith of the services of one of his ten company commanders. In September 1813 Captains Morgan, Ridgeway, and Smyth were in New York under the command of Major Forsyth. Smith had with him in Ohio Captains Appling, Hayes, Graham, and Hamilton. Captain Ramsey was also in Ohio, but was assigned on the recruiting service. Captain Massias was in Georgia.
- ²⁰ Smyth to Parker, Washington City, 14 June 1812, NA, RG 94 M565, Roll 4.
- ²¹ Captain Henry R. Graham supervised the recruiting service for the rifles, but reported to Lieutenant Colonel William McMillan of the 17th Infantry Regiment at Lexington. McMillan commanded the recruiting district of Kentucky of which Graham was a part.
- ²² William Henry Harrison to Armstrong, Franklinton, 8 & 23 June 1813, Secretary of War Papers, vol. 60, Accessed 16 January 2012, <http://www.archive.org>.
- ²³ Sevier to Adjutant and Inspector General, Knoxville, 19 July 1813, Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ²⁴ Graham to Gardiner, Washington, KY, 22 July 1813, Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ²⁵ Adjutant and Inspector General to Lieutenant G. A. Armistead, 17 September 1813, NA, RG 94, M565, Roll 4.
- ²⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, Accessed 16 November 2011, <http://www.archive.org>.
- ²⁷ Gaines to Smith, 21 January 1814, French Mills, Smith Papers.
- ²⁸ In July 1814, Ramsey attended the Treaty of Greenville (Ohio) and served as a witness to the proceedings. Ramsey’s recruiting operation was fairly successful. In early 1815, 74 of 194 soldiers who were in his company from 1813 until 1815 had enlisted in Cincinnati, Chillicothe, or Urbana. NA, RG 98, Entry 367, Order Book of Captain Thomas Ramsey, 1813 to 1815.
- ²⁹ John Armstrong, *Notices on the War*, Volume 2, Appendix, (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1840), 237.
- ³⁰ O’Fallon to Smith, Cincinnati, 8 February 1814. O’Fallon congratulated Smith on his recommendation for promotion and added, “Being myself present when the Secretary of War promised General Harrison that you should have a Brigade of Riflemen in the event of that Corps being increased.” Smith papers.
- ³¹ Smith to Telfair, Sackett’s Harbor, February 1814, Thomas A. Smith Papers. Smith recommended Captains George Haig (SC), George Woodruff (GA), and William Cummings (GA) for promotion. Haig and Cummings were dragoon officers and Woodruff was serving in a staff position. Smith papers.
- ³² Secretary of War to Smith, 26 March 1814, NA, RG 107, M6, Roll 7.
- ³³ Smith to Walbach, Plattsburgh, 17 April 1814, Accessed 7 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ³⁴ Adjutant and Inspector General to Butler, 17 September 1814, NA, RG 94, M565, Roll 5.
- ³⁵ Puthoff to Winder, Chillicothe, 13 July 1814, Accessed 8 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Butler to Bell, 3 September 1814, Lexington, Accessed 6 June 2012, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ³⁸ *American State Papers*, 5, *Military Affairs* 1, 518.

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- ³⁹ McArthur to Butler, Chillicothe, 7 September 1814, McArthur Papers, Book 15, Library of Congress.
- ⁴⁰ McArthur to Butler, 3 October 1814, McArthur Papers, Book 17.
- ⁴¹ Butler to McArthur, Near Lexington, 25 September 1814, McArthur Papers, Book 16.
- ⁴² Butler to Adjutant and Inspector General, Lexington, 3 September 1814, NA, RG 94, M566, Roll 38.
- ⁴³ Todd to Bell, Fort Meigs, 3 October 1814, RG 94, M566, Roll 59.
- ⁴⁴ Butler to Bell, Lexington, 10 July 1814, NA, RG 94, M566, Roll 38.
- ⁴⁵ McArthur was no fan of the Regiment's rifle. In a letter to Senator Thomas Worthington, McArthur felt that the barrel was too short to be either safe or convenient to load. But, while accurate, the rifle he felt was almost impossible to shoot correctly off hand. He recommended the rifles be made with the same barrel length as a musket, keeping the same weight, adding a bayonet, and with sights raised. McArthur to Worthington, 19 March 1814, Worthington Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm Reel 8.
- ⁴⁶ McArthur to Butler, Chillicothe, 7 September 1814, Book 15, McArthur Papers. In September 1812, the military storekeeper at Newport, Kentucky, received 500 rifles, scalping knives, rifle belts, tomahawks, and pouches as part of a shipment for use in the Northwestern Army. It is likely that many of these rifles were forwarded to Franklinton two years later for re-issue to the 2nd Regiment. , *Document Transcriptions of the War of 1812 in the Northwest, Fort Fayette Freight Book*. Richard C. Knopf, (Anthony Wayne Parkway Board. Columbus: Ohio State Museum, 1957), 20.
- ⁴⁷ Todd to Puthoff, Detroit, 19 November 1814, McArthur Papers.
- ⁴⁸ Butler to McArthur, 9 November 1814, Cantonment near Lexington. Butler's request to depart the recruiting service was not unique. Colonel King, 3rd Rifle Regiment, and Colonel Gibson, 4th Rifle Regiment, both expressed similar desires. All three commanders eventually moved to a theater of operations but the size of their respective detachments did not merit a colonel's command. As a result, all served in either a staff position or in some other capacity outside the rifle regiments. McArthur Papers.
- ⁴⁹ McArthur to Woodbridge, 21 December 1814, Chillicothe, "Woodbridge Papers", *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 32, (1902), 565. Accessed 21 December 2012, <http://www.hathitrust.org>.
- ⁵⁰ *A Compilation of Registers of the Army of the United States*, (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1837), 1
- ⁵¹ Ennis Duncan, *The Journal of Ennis Duncan, Junior, orderly sergeant, 16th Regiment, Kentucky Militia Detached*. Transcription and pref. by Richard C. Knopf. (Columbus, Anthony Wayne Parkway Board, Ohio State Museum: 1958) Accessed 21 December 2012, <http://www.hathitrust.org>, 49.
- ⁵² Muster Rolls, Regular Army, 2d Regiment, Riflemen, RG 94, Entry 53.
- ⁵³ Ibid
- ⁵⁴ Ibid
- ⁵⁵ Ibid
- ⁵⁶ Specific items and quantities included: 200 pair of shoes, 50 knapsacks, 100 pair of stockings, 100 pair of socks, 50 linen vests, 50 feathers, 50 pair fatigue trousers, 184 privates shirts, 50 hats, 48 pair woolen overalls, 44 privates coats, four sergeants coats, six sergeants vests, two musicians vests, 50 cockades, 100 pair linen overalls fringed, 50 fringed frocks, 50 fatigue frocks, 50 duffle blankets, and two bugle horns. RG 92, Entry 2117, Sub entry 112, Office of the Military Storekeeper, Receipted Invoices, Box 41.
- ⁵⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, 7, 125.
- ⁵⁸ Irvine to Wallbach, 24 March 1814, Accessed 17 January 2013, <http://www.fold3.com>.
- ⁵⁹ Puthoff received 305 caps, 475 knapsacks, 505 cap plates, 480 privates wool jackets, 25 sergeants wool jackets, 25 sergeants swords, 25 sword belts, and 495 canteens. In November, the major received an additional issue of uniforms, sufficient for about 500 men including wool jackets and overalls, 940 shirts, and 1,000 quarter boots. While at Malden, the rifle companies were well supplied with uniforms, arms, and equipment. While not always of the best quality, quantities were adequate for the soldiers' needs. The men were supplied with a variety of hats, vests, rifle frocks, jackets, linen and woolen overalls, shoes, and blankets, but variations existed among the companies. No coats or gaiters had been furnished to Harrison's or Desha's company. Harrison had both frocks and jackets; Desha only rifle frocks. O'Fallon's company had coats, rifle frocks, jackets, and gaiters. Arms and equipment for all the companies consisted of rifles, cartridge boxes, bullet pouches, powder horns, knapsacks, and canteens, but not haversacks. Camp equipage included wall tents for the officers and common tents for the men. Mess gear consisted of camp kettles and tin pans. None of the companies had copies of either the Articles of War or of the Army's Regulations. NA, RG 92, Entry 2117, Sub entry 35, Office of the Military Storekeeper, Receipted Invoices, Box 42.
- ⁶⁰ The static nature of the 2nd Regiment's mission was offset by United States rangers. Congress had authorized several companies of mounted rangers throughout the war to "range the woods and prevent the unapprised attacks

on women and children". More mobile than the Rifles, at least six companies of rangers served in the Northwest in a mission similar to that envisioned for the riflemen. Drawn from the militia ranks, the rangers provided both a presence and a degree of security to the frontier that the riflemen could not.

⁶¹ Butler to Armstrong, Lexington, 10 July 1814, NA, RG 94, M566, Roll 38. In reply, the Adjutant and Inspector General patiently explained that rifles do not have bayonets and that the War Department had issued pikes to some of the line infantry with little success. Adjutant and Inspector General to Butler, 21 July 1814, RG 94, M565.