



First We Were Soldiers

Ron W. Shaw

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Between 1816 and 1819, more than 1,200 discharged British soldiers, from over 80 regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery, the Royal Navy and miscellaneous support units were compensated for services to the Crown with settlement tickets for 'waste land' at the Perth (Ontario) Military Settlement. By 1822, when the Army passed administration of the scheme into civilian hands, these early settlers had been joined by hundreds more. They kept coming into the 1830s: veterans of the American Revolutionary War, the French Revolutionary War, the Napoleonic Wars, the 1798 Irish Rebellion, the American War of 1812-1814 and service in India and Burma. In First We Were Soldiers Ron W. Shaw introduces us to a cross section of Perth's Soldier-Settlers -- corrupt officers and illiterate Privates, heroes and deserters, wives rescuing wounded husbands from the battlefield, and children born on storm tossed troop ships or in POW camps. In the mix were English, Scots and Irish, as well as Swiss, French, Dutch, Polish, Sicilian and American. Shaw portrays the lives of the men and their families, as they marched with the armies of Wellington and Prevost across the Iberian Peninsula and through the North American backwoods before finding themselves swinging an axe in the elm forests and cedar swamps north of the Rideau River.

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