

Fenian raids helped boost Canadian military and unity:[Final Edition]

Mary Hemmings, Special to the Herald. Calgary Herald. Calgary, Alta.:Jul 25, 1992. p. D7

Abstract (Summary)

THE LAST INVASION OF CANADA: The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870, by Hereward Senior (Dundurn Press, 226 pages, \$30)

Straddling Buffalo, and the Welland Canal, Ridgeway was the site of another Fenian foray. This time, the Fenians enjoyed a victory, despite having to retreat to Fort Erie.

Never fully supported by Canadian Irish nationalists, the Fenians lost any remaining popular support with the murder of Thomas D`Arcy McGee in 1868 by a Fenian. Efforts to create a coalition with Louis Riel during the Metis rebellion proved equally fruitless.

Full Text

(437 words)

(Copyright The Calgary Herald)

THE LAST INVASION OF CANADA: The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870, by Hereward Senior (Dundurn Press, 226 pages, \$30)

Part of the Canadian War Museum`s series The Last Invasion of Canada offers a military overview of the Fenian raids into Canada during the late 1860s.

During this formative period of Canadian politics, the U.S. civil war had just ended. Irish nationalists in the United States had become seasoned war veterans, while the Canadian military continued parade drills.

Irish republican associations were numerous and enjoyed varying degrees of failure. James Stephens, an Irish republican and student of secret societies, founded the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1858. The following year, the American version was established to commemorate Fianna of Celtic military lore.

Chapters were established in the United States and Canada. The purpose of the society was to prepare members for the eventual uprising in Ireland, through the overthrow of British influence in Canada.

Early Fenian excursions enjoyed some success. An attack on Campobello in 1866, bordering Maine and New Brunswick, was unsuccessful but prompted the Canadian government to allocate money and militia for any future attacks.

The Fenians, trusting their own bravado, underestimated French-Canadian support and the support of brethren Irish in Canada.

Straddling Buffalo, and the Welland Canal, Ridgeway was the site of another Fenian foray. This time, the Fenians enjoyed a victory, despite having to retreat to Fort Erie.

Between 1866 and 1870, Fenians continued to make forays into Ontario and Quebec. They targetted Sherbrooke, Que., as the seat of the Irish government in exile.

The volunteers in the frontier farming communities provided the bulk of the Home Guard defence during these years. As a full participant in numerous skirmishes, they proved to be essential in border defence.

Meanwhile, Fenian human resources began to dwindle as Civil War veterans returned to civilian life. Financial mismanagement of the association also contributed to its decline, as well as British counter-intelligence activity.

Never fully supported by Canadian Irish nationalists, the Fenians lost any remaining popular support with the murder of Thomas D`Arcy McGee in 1868 by a Fenian. Efforts to create a coalition with Louis Riel during the Metis rebellion proved equally fruitless.

Finally, the Vatican formally condemned the Fenian brotherhood in 1870, seriously undermining Ireland`s republicans.

Hereward Senior`s military analysis of the more notable battles is well-researched and thoughtfully balanced with political commentary.

The Fenians provided Canada with valuable military experience and induced the Maritimes to join Confederation.

The complacency of the U.S. government throughout this period underlined deep-seated suspicions of American intentions.

(Hemmings is a librarian at University of Calgary`s Law Library and a book reviewer for Library Journal.)

Indexing (document details)

Author(s): Mary Hemmings, Special to the Herald

Section: ENTERTAINMENT

Publication title: Calgary Herald. Calgary, Alta.: Jul 25, 1992. pg. D.7

Source type: Newspaper

ISSN: 08281815

ProQuest document 185920881

ID:

**Text Word
Count** 437

**Document
URL:** <http://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca:2048/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=185920881&Fmt=3&clientId=12303&RQT=309&VName=PQD>