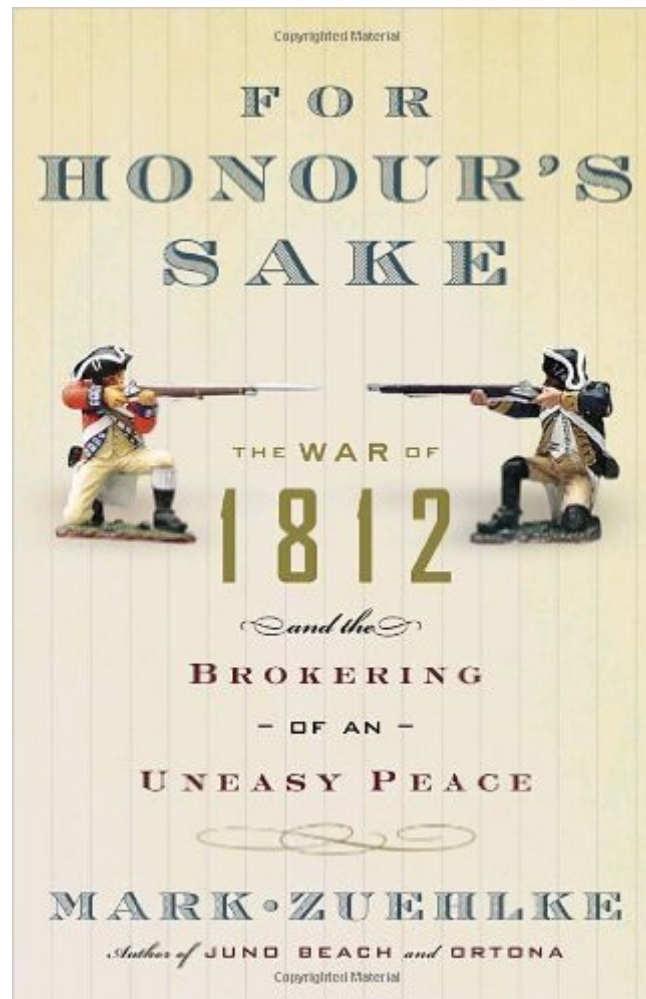


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For Honour's Sake: The War Of 1812 And The Brokering Of An Uneasy Peace



Synopsis

In the tradition of Margaret MacMillan's Paris 1919 comes a new consideration of Canada's most famous war and the Treaty of Ghent that unsatisfactorily concluded it, from one of this country's premier military historians. In the Canadian imagination, the War of 1812 looms large. It was a war in which British and Indian troops prevailed in almost all of the battles, in which the Americans were unable to hold any of the land they fought for, in which a young woman named Laura Secord raced over the Niagara peninsula to warn of American plans for attack (though how she knew has never been discovered), and in which Canadian troops burned down the White House. Competing American claims insist to this day that, in fact, it was they who were triumphant. But where does the truth lie? Somewhere in the middle, as is revealed in this major new reconsideration from one of Canada's master historians. Drawing on never-before-seen archival material, Zuehlke paints a vibrant picture of the war's major battles, vividly re-creating life in the trenches, the horrifying day-to-day manoeuvring on land and sea, and the dramatic negotiations in the Flemish city of Ghent that brought the war to an unsatisfactory end for both sides. By focusing on the fraught dispute in which British and American diplomats quarrelled as much amongst themselves as with their adversaries, Zuehlke conjures the compromises and backroom deals that yielded conventions resonating in relations between the United States and Canada to this very day. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Paperback: 464 pages

Publisher: Vintage Canada; Reprint edition (October 9, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0676977065

ISBN-13: 978-0676977066

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.2 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,082,591 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 in [Books > History > Americas > Canada > War of 1812](#) #81 in [Books > History > Americas > Canada > 19th Century](#) #392 in [Books > History > Americas > Canada > Pre-Confederation](#)

Customer Reviews

Mark Zuelke writes a fast moving detailed blow by blow account of the War of 1812 and the

subsequent negotiated peace treaty at Ghent, swiftly describing personalities, relationships and strategies and mistakes on both sides. The account of the battles for Lake Erie and Lake Ontario kept me on the edge of my seat as did the failed campaign on Montreal and the battle for the Niagara Peninsula. The story of Laura Secord alas is not quite verifiable. (Secord's warning on Tanglefoot's album *Captured Alive* (IMPORT) and other of their albums is a personal favorite.) Oddly enough the War was only an echo of the Napoleonic Wars and the Americans are shown to have greater reason to grieve against the French, yet they decided to side against and attack the British. My only complaint is that the constant change of viewpoints and the sheer number of people referenced in the space of a few paragraphs made the narrative confusing and might be boring for the younger reader but the book had no problem holding my attention. There are also incredible parallels for our own time - the Raisin River massacre where the British left a group of natives to guard American prisoners; the fascinating account of how the Americans due to the advocacy of men like Henry Clay pushed the country into war that they were not prepared to fight and their mistaken notion that the Canadians would welcome their advance. There is also the lesson of a military advantage not used is no advantage at all when held by overly cautious officers such as the British Prevost and the American General Henry "Granny" Dearborn.

The title of this review is based on lyrics of one of the most famous anti-Vietnam War protest songs, "War, What is it Good For?" from 1969 by Edwin Starr. While the question "War, what is it good for?" could, arguably, be used on most wars ever fought, this seemed to me to be particularly apt for the War of 1812. For, after several years of bitter conflict, what were after all the results: A status quo ante bellum (a Latin phrase meaning: "the state existing before the war") with no boundary changes. "For honour's sake" is an exceptional account of this conflict written by Mark Zuehlke, one of Canada's premier military historians and the author of a popular series on the role Canadians played in World War II, which has garnered critical praise. Now he turns his consummate writing skills to a "forgotten war": The War of 1812, fought between the British Empire and the upstart young nation that had fought successfully for independence from the Empire in the years 1775-1783. Although called "the War of 1812" (also called "the Second War of Independence" by some American historians) this clash was actually a 32-month military conflict (June 18, 1812 - February 18, 1815) between the United States and the British Empire, its North American colonies and its Indian allies. The United States declared war in 1812 for several reasons, the major points being trade restrictions brought about by Britain's continuing war with Napoleonic France, the impressment of American merchant sailors into the Royal Navy and British support of

American Indian tribes against American expansion.

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