



James FitzGibbon: Defender of Upper Canada

Ruth McKenzie

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James FitzGibbon, Defender of Upper Canada, is the often poignant story of a poor man's rise to authority in the Upper Canada of the 1800s.

Born the son of a tenant farmer in Ireland, FitzGibbon's valour as a soldier brought him to the attention of those destined for power in the Canadas. Hero of the Battle of Beaver Dams in 1813, one o the decisive battles in the War of 1812, FitzGibbon's brilliance as tactician and negotiator was needed time and again whether to settle Irish unrest on the Cornwall Canal, or to organize Toronto's defence against William Lyon Mackenzie's rebel forces in 1837.

As a public administrator, FitzGibbon's rise was slow and disappointing. Despite holding a multitude of offices, he was continually in debt. And despite repeated petitions, FitzGibbon's tireless military and public services went unrecognized and unrewarded. His final reward as a ceremonial knight in Windsor Castle adds a tragicomic touch to a fascinating tale.



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