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John R. Grodzinski, *Defender of Canada: Sir George Prevost and the War of 1812*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2013. Pp. xxi, 375. ISBN 978-0-8061-4387-3.

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In *Defender of Canada*, historian John Grodzinski (Royal Military College of Canada)¹ provides a biographical history of Sir George Prevost from his childhood as the son of a Swiss Protestant who fought with the British army to his early experiences learning command in the Napoleonic Wars in the Caribbean and his career as a civil and military commander in Canada during the War of 1812. He details his subject's challenges and decisions from a revisionist viewpoint. Since Prevost died during the court-martial he had called to clear his name just after the war, Grodzinski sets himself the goal of completing that task as well in this generous volume.

In the introduction of the book, the author states his intention to make a case for George Prevost's essential role in ensuring the survival of Canada despite the stark disadvantages in manpower he faced in the war with the United States.

This work is a reassessment of the leadership of Sir George Prevost ... as commander in chief of British North America during the War of 1812. It is hoped that this reexamination will restore him as a central figure in the history of that conflict. Prevost faced tremendous challenges. Far from home, with irregular communication and responsible for the defense of a massive and complex theater, he employed a mix of regular soldiers, sailors, locally raised forces, and indigenous peoples with prudence and economy that magnified the stresses on his opponents, defeating most of their plans and preserving British North America's existence. (8)

Besides the main narrative, the book includes correspondence that reveals the constraints Prevost was under as well as the behavior of those who sought, successfully, immediately after the war to impugn his reputation in regard to the Battle of Plattsburgh. Also included is material related to the court-martial that was just beginning when Prevost died in early 1816.

The book begins with a "Note to the Reader" that glosses "certain British political, social, military, and naval terminology [that] may be unfamiliar to American readers" (xvii). There follows an introduction setting the stage of the war, ten chapters, an epilogue, and six appendices that furnish supporting documentation, especially on Prevost's attempt to clear his name.

Chapter 1 sketches Prevost's life from his birth in 1767 to his appointment as a provincial governor in 1808. The second chapter covers the three years of his governorships in Nova Scotia, Martinique, and Quebec. Chapter 3 concerns his preparations for war as the Governor General of British North America in 1811. Chapter 4 discusses the declaration of war and the early battles in 1812. The next three chapters look at three periods (January–May 1813, June–December 1813, and January–August 1814) when Prevost's leadership helped Canada survive repeated invasions on multiple fronts. The final three chapters are devoted to the preparation for, conduct of, and aftermath of the fateful Plattsburgh campaign, during which Prevost seemed to be an overly cautious and ineffective military commander.

The book is suitable for high school and undergraduate students of history, but all readers wishing for a Canadian perspective on the War of 1812 will find it a particularly valuable resource. Those familiar mostly with American historiography will discover here a more balanced view of the war as it was fought by both sides. The book will also appeal to readers of military history with an interest in the strategic, operational, logistical, and political/diplomatic facets of military leadership rather than tactical matters alone.

The following is a sample of Grodzinski's straightforward declarative prose style.

1. He is the editor of the online *War of 1812 Magazine* and has previously published *The War of 1812: An Annotated Bibliography* (NY: Routledge, 2008). The present book is a revision of his doctoral dissertation (Royal Military College, 2010).

The results of the first six months of hostility were surprising. The prewar assumptions held by both sides that Upper Canada would fall quickly were never realized, and a combination of factors was responsible for this outcome. The preparations Prevost undertook in both provinces on the eve of the conflict and his emphasis on defending both Canadas allowed an effectual defense. American mismanagement and poor leadership at the strategic and operational levels prompted a series of shoddily conducted enemy offenses that were repulsed. The renewal of the Native alliance resulted in great dividends as Natives made important contributions to the outcomes at Mackinac, Detroit, Queenston, and Lacolle, permitting the extension of British influence with nations in the upper Great Lakes district and the Mississippi country. Prevost's leadership, while not perfect, had achieved an effective balance among the political, economic, military, and naval pressures that he faced. (96)

To buttress his main argument—that George Prevost was indispensable to the Canadian cause—the author cites his letters and clarifies the logistical, tactical, and operational decisions he made to achieve his strategic goals. His good diplomatic ties with Native Americans are contrasted with the strains in his relations with the naval officers, particularly Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo, he had to work with. Likewise, Prevost's efforts to gain the support of the French Canadian population of Lower Canada complicated his dealings with English merchants.

Whether one is persuaded by John Grodzinski's revisionist efforts to rehabilitate the reputation of Canada's much maligned wartime leader, his masterful use of primary source documents, including Prevost's correspondence with other officials in Canada and London, will enable his readers to reach their own judgments about how the man maintained the delicate equilibrium between following orders and leading Canada in the most perilous period of its history.