

BUTLER'S RANGERS

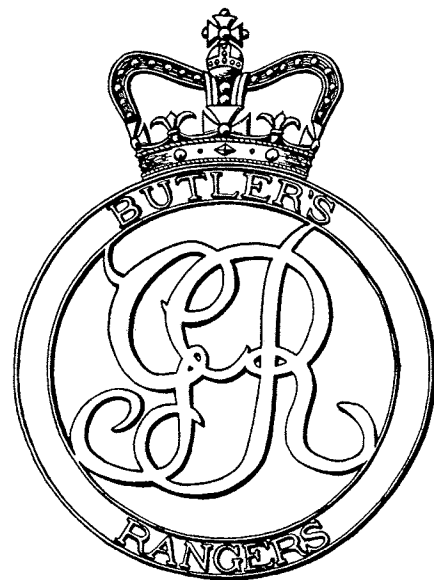
The Butler's Rangers were a group of eight companies of men who fought for the Crown during the American Revolutionary War. The Rangers were formed by Lieutenant Colonel John Butler and were composed of Loyalists, mainly from the Mohawk Valley (in present day New York), who came to Canada fleeing the imprisonment and persecution inflicted by the American Rebels. The Butler's Rangers were a courageous band of men who were seldom beaten, and it was widely acknowledged that for "steadiness, bravery, and allegiance they were not to be excelled." Often they inflicted numerous casualties on their enemy while losing only a few men themselves, and were so skilled that the enemy scarcely knew of their presence until they were attacked.

John Butler was born in New London, Connecticut, in 1725. His father, Walter Butler, who was a Captain in the army, moved his family to the Mohawk Valley in 1742. In 1755, John Butler was nominated as Captain in the Indian Department, by Sir William Johnson, superintendent of the Northern Indians. As a result of his intimate knowledge of several Indian languages, Butler served as Sir Johnson's interpreter and accompanied him on a number of campaigns during the French and Indian War. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Butler had already distinguished himself in a number of military engagements.

With the increasing power of the Rebels in the United States, it became apparent that the support of the various Indian tribes would be essential to the Loyalist cause. It was the responsibility of the Northern Indian Department, now headed by Sir William Johnson's son-in-law, Guy Johnson, to secure the support of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy. Unable to do so, Johnson, Colonel Daniel Claus (Sir Johnson's other son-in-law), John Butler, and approximately 250 Loyalist and Indian supporters, including Joseph Brant, went to Canada in 1775.

In 1776, Johnson went to New York to serve under Sir William Howe, and Claus went to England. In their absences, John Butler was appointed Deputy Superintendent by Sir Guy Carleton, an appointment which led to bitter animosity between Butler and Claus. In his attempts to secure Indian support, Butler met with only mixed success. He had the support of the Mohawk and some Senecas and Cayugas, but the Iroquois remained neutral and refused to support the Loyalist side.

During the summer of 1777, Butler requested and was given permission to raise a battalion of rangers -- eight companies, each consisting of one Captain, one Lieutenant, three Sergeants, three Corporals and fifty privates. Of these eight companies, two were to be composed of individuals knowing Indian languages and familiar with their customs and war practices; the remaining six would be people acquainted with the woods. By the middle of December, 1777, Butler had filled his first company of Rangers. On May 2, 1778, Butler's Rangers and a number of Indians, began a march from Niagara to recruit men from the Mohawk Valley. They attracted many Loyalists, and the entire battalion was quickly filled. The Rangers wore uniforms of dark green cloth trimmed with Scarlet. They had low flat caps with a brass plate in front bearing a G. R. encircled by the words "Butler's Rangers."



Butler's Rangers' Cap Insignia

The Rangers continued to play an important role throughout the American Revolution, carrying out a number of raids against the American Rebels, from Fort Niagara and Fort Detroit. Butler suggested that communities be developed for the Rangers and their families who were living around the Forts, and in the latter part of 1780, the first settlements were planned for the Rangers and other Loyalists who had been arriving in the area since the beginning of the Revolution.

When the Butler's Rangers were disbanded in June, 1784, a majority of them (258 officers and their families) decided to remain in the area. Both the Butler's Rangers and the Loyalists who had given up their land in the United States to remain loyal to Britain, were granted land in Canada by the Crown. John Butler was a prominent citizen in the settlement which developed in this area, and served as the Judge of the district until the formation of the Province of Upper Canada. He also continued in his post as deputy Superintendent of the Indian Department until his death in May, 1796, in Newark (present day Niagara-on-the-Lake). Although advanced in age, many of Butler's Rangers lived to fight in the War of 1812, which they did with the same spirit which had distinguished them in the Revolutionary War.