

# HALF PAY OFFICERS

## THE CAUSE

In the early years of the 19th Century, the Emperor Napoleon sought to spread the ideals of the French Revolution throughout all of continental Europe. In a series of **wars involving every major European power** he established himself as one of the greatest military commanders of all time.

However, in 1812 and 1813 he suffered defeats which led to his abdication and exile on the Island of Elba. Less than a year later he escaped and returned to the battlefield. In 1815 he was defeated in battle for the last time, at the Battle of Waterloo.



## THE PROBLEM

The end of the Napoleonic Wars produced a glut of returning English servicemen who found upon their return home that **England was in the midst of an economic depression** with very few prospects.

## THE SOLUTION

To alleviate the situation the **British government offered retiring servicemen land in the colonies** in lieu of half their pay/pension. The amount of land you received depended on your rank.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Many took this offer as a means to maintain their social or class standing. The opening of over two million acres of land north of Rice Lake for settlement in 1818 coincided with the first waves of "half-pay officers".

As much of the land in the southern part of Upper Canada had already been settled, **many half-pay officers received land grants to the north of Rice Lake**. However **some preferred the more settled areas** and bought farms along the lakeshore. **Many chose Cobourg** because of its proximity to their lands and its society.

Two of the half-pay officers to arrive here were *Walter Boswell* and *Archibald Macdonald*.

