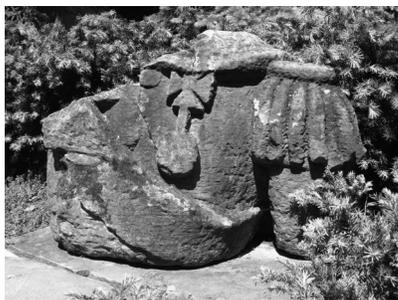


## HOW BROCK'S SHOULDER GOT TO BROCK

Late one October night in 1966, Isaac Brock's left shoulder suddenly appeared on the front lawn of Brock University. No, it wasn't his actual shoulder, but a carved limestone replica from his statue atop the Brock Monument at Queenston Heights. According to campus lore, it had fallen off many years before after being struck by lightning. Some students found it sitting at the base of the column, and claimed it for the University. It was thought that other body parts might follow. As the student newspaper *The Badger* reported: "The liberators ... hope to recover his other shoulder so that we can at least have mates." That never occurred, but thanks to the initiative of these students, Brock's shoulder still resides at the University, in Jubilee Court.

Or so the story goes. But what really happened? How did a piece of Brock's Monument end up at Brock University?



*Brock's shoulder in Jubilee Court today*

### The History of the Monument

The story of the University's namesake, Major-General Sir Isaac Brock is well known, and his death in particular has become legendary. He was shot while leading a charge against invading American troops at the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812. Some have him expiring without uttering a word, but others say he urged his soldiers to "push on." The Latin equivalent — *Surgite!* — is now the University's motto.

Exactly 12 years later, on October 13, 1824, thousands gathered at Queenston Heights to dedicate a monument in his honour. The remains of Brock and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel John Macdonell, were brought from Fort George where they were buried after the battle and were reinterred in a vault in the monument's foundation. According to a later writer in *The Globe*, Macdonell's body was "a mass of decomposition" but Brock's features were "nearly perfect and easily recognised." In 1825 architect Francis Hall resumed work on the monument, a Tuscan column rising to 135 feet, but possibly because of financial constraints the statue planned for the very top was never added. No report of a formal opening ceremony has been found.

As fate would have it, the two comrades in arms were not allowed to rest in peace, for on April 17, 1840, the column was damaged beyond repair by a terrorist bomber believed to be Irish-Canadian Benjamin Lett. Described as a "vagabond" by none other than Charles Dickens, Lett was a disciple of William Lyon Mackenzie, leader of the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837.

Public indignation was fierce, and on July 30, 1840, thousands gathered at Queenston Heights for a meeting to inaugurate a new monument. A design competition was held and architect Thomas Young's proposal was chosen, but nothing happened for more than a decade, again because of financial problems. Then at last, on July 9, 1853, the old monument was torn down, and a few days later Brock and Macdonell were moved to a temporary resting-place in the Hamilton family cemetery at Willowbank in Queenston village (though not without some controversy about careless workmen possibly mixing up the remains). On October 13 the corner stone of the new monument was laid, and Brock and Macdonell were reinterred in separate vaults, once more before a gathering of thousands.

The new monument was not, however, Young's winning design. Instead it was an imposing 185-foot Corinthian column topped by a statue of Brock, designed by different architect, William Thomas. Completed in 1857, it was officially opened on October 13, 1859 before a crowd approaching 15,000 people. A year later the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VII) attended a ceremony at the monument in honour of Brock and veterans of the War of 1812.

### The Storm of '29

For more than 70 years the statue of Isaac Brock stood proudly atop the monument on the Niagara Escarpment brow at Queenston Heights. But in 1929 disaster struck. On April 5, a devastating electrical storm swept through central Ontario, causing widespread damage. Brock's statue was one of the casualties — his outstretched right arm broke off and came crashing down. Weighing nearly half a ton, it split into three pieces that buried themselves deeply in the ground.

The monument may already have been weakened by an earthquake that shook Niagara Falls on November 12, 1927, and an inspection confirmed the worst. The statue was in particularly bad shape, and the 1930 annual report of the Niagara Parks Commission stated: "It is remarkable that the head had remained so long without falling, for the upper part of the torso was completely shattered through the action of the elements."

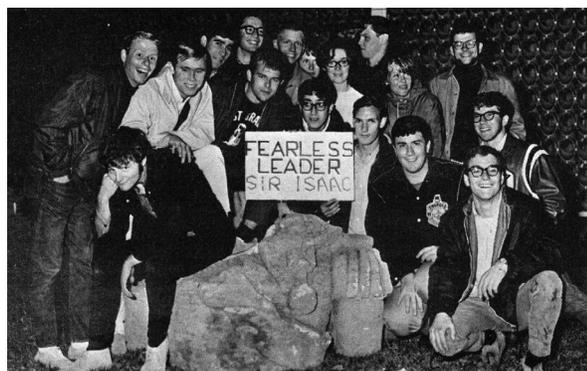
There was no choice but to remove that portion of the statue from the waist up and lower it to the ground. The head, though weathered, was apparently considered solid enough to put back in position, but the rest — the right arm, torso and left shoulder — had to be recut from new stone. In addition, the whole monument was repointed to make it more weather-proof. (There have been three major restorations since then — in 1973-74, 1985 and 2008, the most recent following a four-year period when the monument was closed to the public for safety reasons.)



*Brock's head at ground level, 1930*

### The Journey to Brock

Following the restoration in 1930, the right arm seems to have been stored inside the monument, but the torso-cum-shoulder was left outside and largely ignored. Until, that is, the night of Thursday, October 13, 1966 (appropriately the anniversary of Brock's death) when Brock students "reclaimed" the stone and deposited it at the main entrance to the University. This was not, incidentally, at the Schmon Tower, which was still under construction, but at the former Frozenaire plant below the Escarpment where the University began. The following day the *St. Catharines Standard* published a picture of 17 exuberant students gathered round their trophy, though the caption states that 23 actually took part.



*The students and their trophy, 1966*

Brock's President, James A. Gibson wasted no time having the students return the stone to the Niagara Parks Commission, only for them to repeat

the escapade the following year. Then in 1973, by which time Parks Canada had assumed responsibility for the Brock Monument, it came back once more. This time it was a legal move, a donation in honour of the many individuals, organizations, corporations and unions that helped raise \$8.5 million for the University's Founding Fund. A plaque (which has since gone missing) was mounted on the stone and unveiled by C. Bruce Hill, General Chairman of the Fund, in the newly-christened Founders' Court in the Mackenzie Chown Complex.



*C. Bruce Hill in Founders' Court, 1973*

The stone stayed in Founders' Court until the University's 25th anniversary in 1989 when it was transferred to Jubilee Court. There are plans to move it again later this year, this time indoors. The destination is expected to be Brock's new Market Hall, which already displays a dramatic mural by artist Bogdan Luca depicting images from the War of 1812, including one of Isaac Brock on his horse Alfred. Of course, the perfect final touch would be to have the right arm, the piece that fell in 1929, placed in the Market also, thereby fulfilling *The Badger's* dream of 1966 and providing Isaac with a sense of closure. What seems to be the forearm is already in the University's possession, but the whereabouts of the hand and shoulder are uncertain.

### Postscript

A final word about the medal on Brock's chest. The part shaped like a Maltese Cross denotes a military member of the British Order of the Bath. Sir Isaac Brock never wore the medal and didn't even know he'd been honoured, for he was not knighted until October 10, 1812 just three days before his death. But the presence of the medal on the stone is quite legitimate, thanks to a proclamation by the Prince Regent (later George IV) in 1813 authorizing its inclusion on any monument subsequently erected in Brock's honour.

*[The preceding is an updated version of "Statue Shoulder Stolen in Monumental Prank," an article co-authored by Alun Hughes and Jocelyn Titone that appeared in Brock News in March 2011.]*

**Principal Sources:** (in addition to those cited in text): archival records from Brock University Special Collections; *St. Catharines Journal*, *St. Catharines Constitutional*, *The Globe*, *Upper Canada Gazette*, *The Church*, *Niagara Mail*, *Niagara Chronicle* and *London Gazette*, various dates from 1813 to 1859; Malcomson, *Burying General Brock*; Seibel, *Ontario's Niagara Parks*; McArthur and Szamosi, *William Thomas Architect*.

**Credits:** layout (Loris Gasparotto); editing (John Burtiak); information (former Brock students and other persons too numerous to list)

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