

**Combat: US Soldier versus British Soldier, War of 1812.**

**Osprey Combat 54 (published 2021)**

**Text by Gregg Adams. Illustrations by Johnny Shumate**

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**Reviewed by Martin Smith**

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This was the first Osprey I've purchased from their 'Combat' series, the publisher's website suggesting that the titles in this series are intended to "...pit history's adversaries against one another, from the snows of World War II's Eastern Front to the mud of the Somme..." and that they include "...first-hand accounts, expert analysis, photographs, maps and specially commissioned colour plates....to immerse you in the experience of close quarter battles".

This work by Gregg Adams compares the regular infantrymen of the British and US armies as they clashed in the War of 1812. His introduction describes the causes of the conflict, and thus sets the scene for the war that followed, in which a young United States took on the old order of the British Empire, attempting to remove or reduce the interference from and adverse influence exerted by the latter. In the ensuing two-year long war the US military found itself initially outclassed, and so was consequently challenged to update and upgrade its armed forces.

After early discussions of the organisation, leadership, logistics and weaponry of the respective sides Mr Adams chooses three battles between the adversaries to illustrate how the realities of the war prompted changes, as the US reacted proactively to early setbacks. By making the necessary modifications to organisation, leadership and training the young nation produced a far more professional force by the end of the war than had been in place prior to 1812.



The battles chosen were: -

1. Queenston Heights, 1812, in which a poorly organised US invasion of Canada across the Niagara River came to grief after a British counterattack.
2. Crysler's Farm, 1813, on the Canadian bank of the St. Lawrence River, in which an American flank march was thwarted and a promising advance elsewhere fell foul of low ammunition and crumbling morale.
3. Chippawa, 1814, upstream of Niagara Falls, where newly promoted, talented leadership and the extensive training regime which they had initiated allowed the US forces to hold firm in the face of their opponents, the world-renowned British redcoats, and force them to withdraw from the field.

In the brief sections on Analysis and Aftermath which follow, Mr Adams goes on to describe how the American army learned from the experience of its early encounters with some of the most professional soldiers in the world to modify its officer selection process and unit training doctrines. This led to the development of a reinvigorated US Army which could take on the British for whom they "...were now their equals in leadership, training and morale".

As with most Ospreys there are profuse illustrations, these including battlefield views from the perspective of rank-and-file soldiers, depictions of line infantrymen of both sides, with descriptive text, portraits of some of the personalities involved, as well as period prints of soldiers both off duty and in combat. An area map covering the border territory fought over complements the Introduction section very well, and the three battlefield maps of Queenston, Crysler's Farm and Chippawa are very nicely drawn and annotated and would be of great help with wargaming any of the actions described.

In summary, I was very much impressed by this concise but informative Osprey, which achieved its aim of comparing the combatants of the War of 1812 largely through an analysis of three key battles, and I believe it would serve as a great starting point for any wargamer seeking to get a feel for the period.