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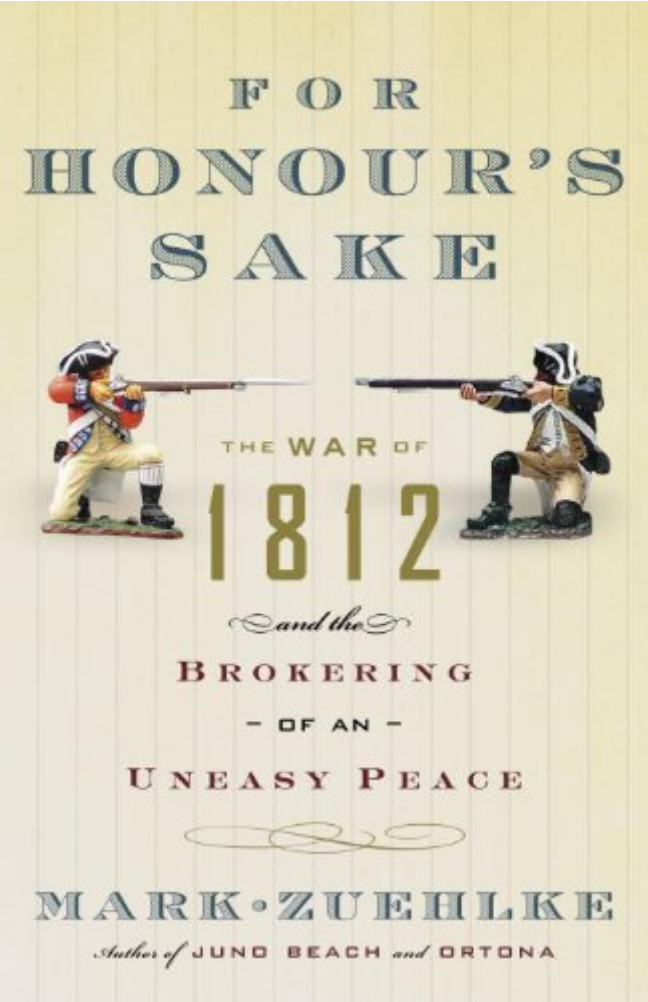
For Honour's Sake: The War Of 1812 And The Brokering Of An Uneasy Peace



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Synopsis

In the tradition of Margaret MacMillanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Paris 1919 comes a new consideration of CanadaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s most famous war and the Treaty of Ghent that unsatisfactorily concluded it, from one of this countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s premier military historians. In the Canadian imagination, the War of 1812 looms large. It was a war in which British and Indian troops prevailed in almost all of the battles, in which the Americans were unable to hold any of the land they fought for, in which a young woman named Laura Secord raced over the Niagara peninsula to warn of American plans for attack (though how she knew has never been discovered), and in which Canadian troops burned down the White House. Competing American claims insist to this day that, in fact, it was they who were triumphant.But where does the truth lie? Somewhere in the middle, as is revealed in this major new reconsideration from one of CanadaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s master historians. Drawing on never-before-seen archival material, Zuehlke paints a vibrant picture of the warÃ¢â ¬â„¢s major battles, vividly re-creating life in the trenches, the horrifying day-to-day manoeuvring on land and sea, and the dramatic negotiations in the Flemish city of Ghent that brought the war to an unsatisfactory end for both sides. By focusing on the fraught dispute in which British and American diplomats quarrelled as much amongst themselves as with their adversaries, Zuehlke conjures the compromises and backroom deals that yielded conventions resonating in relations between the United States and Canada to this very day.From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

The title of this review is based on lyrics of one of the most famous anti-Vietnam War protest songs, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“WarÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• from 1969 by Edwin Starr. While the question ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“War, what is it good for?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• could, arguably, be used on most wars ever fought, this seemed to me to be particularly apt for the War of 1812. For, after several years of bitter conflict, what were after all the results: A status quo ante bellum (a Latin phrase meaning: "the state existing before the war") with no boundary changes.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“For honourÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s sakeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is an exceptional account of this conflict written by Mark Zuehlke, one of CanadaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s premier military historians and the author of a popular series on the role Canadians played in World War II, which has garnered critical praise. Now he turns his consummate writing skills to a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“forgotten warÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•: The War of 1812, fought between the British Empire and the upstart young nation that had fought successfully for independence from the Empire in the years 1775ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ1783.Although called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the War of 1812ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (also called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the Second War of Independence" by some American historians) this clash was actually a 32-month military conflict (June 18, 1812 ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ February 18, 1815) between the United States and the British Empire, its North American colonies and its Indian allies.The United States declared war in 1812 for several reasons, the major points being trade restrictions brought about by Britain’s continuing war with Napoleonic France, the impressment of American merchant sailors into the Royal Navy and British support of American Indian tribes against American expansion.For Britain, the so-called War of 1812 was never more than a sideshow, as the British Empire was involved in a struggle with the French military juggernaut of Napoleon between the years 1793-1815 and could ill afford sending (major) forces overseas.The war was fought in three principal theatres. Firstly, at sea; secondly, both land and naval battles were fought on the AmericanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œCanadian frontier and on the Great Lakes; and thirdly, the American South and Gulf Coast.In fact, as Zuehlke shows in this magnificent history, the war was more of a struggle to answer the question: who would dominate North America?Although written without bias, it is refreshing to have an Canadian author like Zuehlke give just a slightly different slant to the story of the War of 1812 than usually found in those histories written by Americans, no matter how conscientiously neutral they try to write.Drawing

on never-before-seen archival material, Zuehlke has written a clear, thorough account of the conflict. He uses eye-witness accounts to paint a vibrant picture of the warÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s major battles from all sides. He also - different from other histories of this conflict, where the diplomatic shenanigans are usually tacked on as an afterthought - gives throughout the narrative equal weight to the protracted negotiations that took place in the Flemish city of Ghent.Through their own words, we get intimately close to the negotiators, titans of American history, by the use of their letters and diaries: Henry Clay, one of the greatest orators of his time, who turned from war-mongering to peace-envoy. The irascible John Quincy Adam, later to be president like his father John Adams before him, and, so far, the only president later elected to the United States House of Representatives. And last but not least, Albert Gallatin, the longest-serving United States Secretary of the Treasury and also the diplomat that brought the negotiations, through his patience and skill in dealing not only with the British but also with his (often in conflict with each other) fellow members of the American commission, to an successful end.The negotiations, that ultimately brought the war to an unsatisfactory end for both sides but ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“honour of both sides was preserved.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•For those wishing to read more about this conflict, I recommend: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian AlliesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• by Alan Taylor. For those wishing to read more about the conflict to which the War of !812 was but a sideshow, I recommend: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Savage Storm: Britain on the Brink in the Age of NapoleonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• by David Andress and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Britain Against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• by Roger Knight.

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