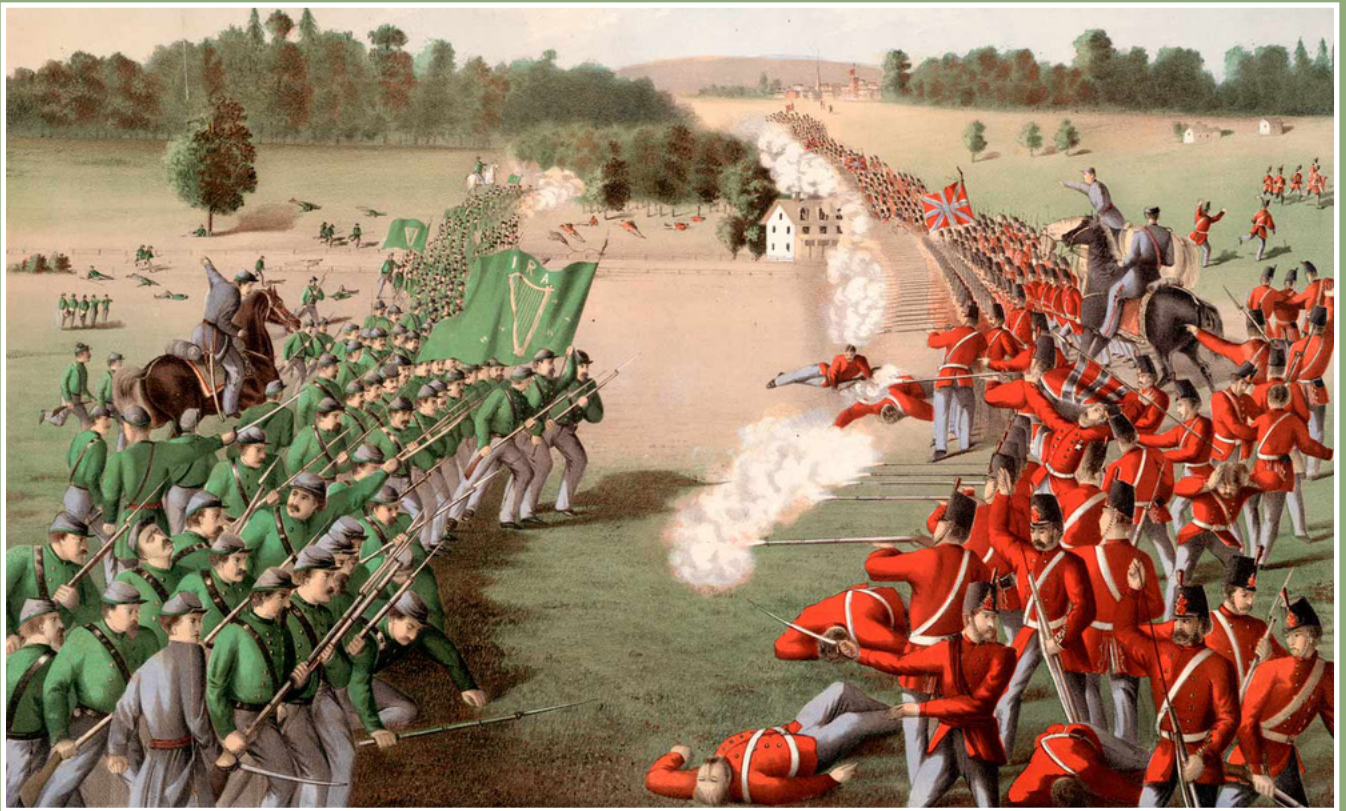


The Fenians of Guelph and the Arrest of Peter Mahon

EVENINGS WITH HISTORY



Battle of Ridgeway, 1866

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St. Andrew's Presbyterian, 161 Norfolk St.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, the Irish republican 'Fenian Brotherhood' posed a genuine threat to the nascent Dominion of Canada. Hoping to use Canada as a bargaining chip in the fight for Irish independence from Britain, the Fenians invaded Ontario and Manitoba from the United States three times between 1866 and 1871.

Following the assassination of cabinet minister Thomas D'Arcy McGee by a suspected Fenian in April 1868, the Dominion Government began to search for other Fenian supporters in Canada. Guelph and Puslinch Township were a key focus of the investigation! There were rumours of three illicit Fenian lodges operating in the city and secret police visited Guelph on several occasions. Their investigations culminated in the dramatic arrest of local 'ringleader' Peter Mahon on May 6. Mahon's arrest shocked Guelph and would divide opinion in the community for years to come.