

## **The War of 1812, New Insights and Sources**

**By Fred Blair**

In 2010, I completed a transcript of the War of 1812 militia rolls and pay lists for the 2nd York Militia that were published online by Collections Canada. Between 2012 and 2014, I worked with a number of historical and heritage groups within the muster area of the 2nd York. One of the most rewarding relationships was with the Trafalgar Township Historical Society.

During that time period, I also completed a set of transcripts for the 5th Lincoln Militia. I discovered that the 2nd York and 5th Lincoln were both stationed at Burlington Heights during the war and that this allowed the two regiments to transfer men between them to create mixed detachments as they were needed. The first of these was probably Captain Samuel Hatt's detachment assembled to accompany Isaac Brock to Fort Detroit in August, 1812. Comparing the muster rolls and pay lists for the two regiments, I discovered that each set had unique documents that the other lacked. Some documents did not survive the war and others were illegible years later. What discoveries might be hidden in other sets of rolls?

In the last four years, I have been working on a number of related projects. As the Niagara Historical Society had done a lot of research on the five Lincoln Militias, I decided that I would look more closely at the other two York Militias. This year, I completed transcripts for the 3rd York Militia. This regiment was mustered from the townships north and east of the Town of York. As this regiment was usually stationed at Fort York with two other militia regiments, men were transferred between the 3rd York and the 1st York Militia in the town and the 1st Durham Militia further to the west.

There did not appear to have been any transfers with the 2nd York Militia so there was little interaction with the men of Trafalgar Township. However, there were some unique documents in the 3rd York Regimental set that revealed insights into what the Trafalgar men and other militia men experienced throughout the province during the war.

Men of the 2nd York had been reported as absent but there was little indication of the reasons for their leave from service. One of the 3rd York documents included a number of specific reasons. Their families were "much in want of their assistance" or "in great distress." Thomas Adams wife had died and his children lacked care. While reports of men "wounded" were common, John Tirer was recorded as having been struck by a musket ball through both legs at the Battle of Queenston Heights.

Other discoveries were a ten percent property tax deducted from officer's pay, a special small cavalry unit stationed east of York on the Kingston Road as couriers, a report on married men killed at the Capture of York in 1813 with the number of children in the care of each widow, a list of militia men who had aided the Americans while they held the Town of York, records of men who served as substitutes for others, additional service exemptions for ferrymen, postmen, and coroners, a list of former military officers retired and residing in the muster area, and a report of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition returned to the regimental stores after the war.

The 3rd York Militia rolls and pay lists have been published online at <http://images.ourontario.ca/TrafalgarTownship/3571995/data?dis=dm>