

# *Brief History of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of York Militia & Historic Mississauga*

2012 marks the Bicentennial of the War of 1812. Heritage Mississauga has undertaken a research project aimed at documenting the residents of historic Mississauga who volunteered to serve with the militia during the War of 1812.

While the City of Mississauga (formerly Toronto Township) has some connections to the War of 1812 in the form of past residents who served as militiamen during the war, largely along the Niagara frontier, no battles or events of note took place within the modern boundaries of the City of Mississauga. To the east, in York (now the City of Toronto), Fort York was a military bastion during the war, and was captured and destroyed by American forces in 1813. Fort York was rebuilt in 1814 and stands today as a National Historic Site in Canada. To the south and west conflict neared our borders as invading American forces were repelled at engagements ranging from Stoney Creek to Burlington Bay.

Volunteer militiamen from Toronto Township (now the City of Mississauga) were involved in various capacities during the War, with some serving in support-oriented duties with the Embodied Militia, while others seeing action in 1812 as volunteer members of the First and Second Flank Companies of the 2nd Regiment of the York Militia (with some others serving with the Lincoln Militia and other regiments). In 1813 and 1814, as the militia was reorganized, some of “our” militiamen served with the Volunteer Battalion of Incorporated Militia of Upper Canada, and others with the Royal Artillery Drivers (Car Brigade), Rifle Company, and with the Commissariat (Wagon Department).

Through this dedicated service, many of “our” militiamen were present and participated in some of the major engagements during the course of the war, including battles at Chippawa, Burlington Heights, Fort Detroit, Fort Erie, Fort George, Fort York, King’s Head Inn, Lundy’s Lane, Queenston Heights, St. David’s, Stoney Creek, and others. Most often, their service was less glamorous but no less important to the war effort, namely in the transport of goods and supplies, garrison duty, and road maintenance, although some were involved in the hostilities, some were wounded, some captured, some deserted, and some never returned home.

Historic Mississauga (Toronto Township) was part of York County in the Home District in 1812. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the York Militia drew its men from what is now southern Mississauga (Toronto Township), Oakville (Trafalgar Township), Burlington (Nelson Township), Hamilton (Barton Township), Dundas, Ancaster and Flamborough, and other outlying areas.

In terms of Historic Mississauga, the population at the time was roughly 250 people living within the limits of Toronto Township in 1812, and of them approximately 75 men

who would have qualified for militia service. We have, to date, identified some 51 individuals who lived in or owned land within historic Mississauga who served in some capacity with the militia during the war.

The majority of these militiamen served in the Embodied Militia, and while some did see combat at times, most were involved with the transport of goods and supplies, guard duty, and road maintenance.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the York Militia, or the 2<sup>nd</sup> York, established 2 Flank Companies. The 1<sup>st</sup> Flank Company was led by Captain John Chisholm and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flank Company was led by Captain William Applegarth. Over 140 men volunteered to serve with the Flank Companies at various times in 1812.

For much of the war the 2<sup>nd</sup> York was under the overall command of Colonel Richard Beasley.

In the Flank Companies, 15 individuals from historic Mississauga were enrolled in the 1<sup>st</sup> Flank Company, and 4 individuals in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flank Company. Many of these men were present at the early battles of the War of 1812, including the capture of Fort Detroit and the Battle of Queenston Heights.

Within the Embodied Militia of the 2<sup>nd</sup> York, at least two local companies were formed independent of the Flank Companies, and from records these Embodied Militia Companies seemed to each draw from their immediate areas and were recruited and organized by Captain Thomas Merigold, Captain William Thompson, Ensign Philip Cody, and Lieutenant Frederick Starr Jarvis, likely amongst others.