

A FINE AND SCARCE 1812 WAR CASUALTY MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793 TO A PRIVATE IN THE 8TH FOOT WHO WAS WOUNDED BY MUSKET SHOT AT THE BATTLE OF FORT GEORGE, UPPER CANADA, ON 27 MAY 1813



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, CLASP MARTINIQUE 'EDWD. MARA, 8TH FOOT'

Edward Mara, a 22 year old weaver from Robert's Cove, Cork, enlisted into the 8th Foot at Cork on 29 August 1804. He would serve in the West Indies with his regiment in 1808, taking part in the landings and capture of Martinique in January/February 1809, before being posted to Halifax, Nova Scotia several months later.

During the 1812 War against America, Private Mara, having been posted from 1 Company in October 1812, was serving with 4 Company, which was one of the 5 companies of the 8th stationed at Fort George in Upper Canada when the Americans attacked on 27th May 1813. The battle, which was an American victory, was a particularly severe one for the 8th foot, during which they suffered the brunt of the casualties, or approximately 50% of the near 500 Officers and men from the Regiment present. Private Mara was one of the casualties, his service papers noting he was:

'wounded by a musket shot under the right shoulder arm at Fort George Upper Canada on the 27th May 1813'

Of the 92 NCO's/Men present in Private Mara's 4 Company, casualties were particularly heavy during the battle, with 10 killed and 33 taken prisoner. Only 5 Company suffering more with 6 killed and 45 taken prisoner.

Despite his wound, musters show Mara remaining on duty, or at least his wounds did not require long hospitalisation, though in the October 1813 muster, he is listed as 'Sick at York'. Back on duty the following month, Mara has no additional notes in the musters, bar being at Fort George in July 1813 and 'On Command Fort George' in October 1814. As such, Mara's movements would have been that of his Regiment post 27 May 1813 until 1815. During this period, the 1st Battalion, 8th Foot were involved in a great number of actions and battles, including some of the hardest fought of the war at Stony Creek, Chippawa, Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie. A list of the largest battles they participated in is as follows; detachments were involved in others:

Battle of Fort George, May 27, 1813.

Battle of Sackett's Harbour, 28 May 1813 (the 5 companies not at Fort George on 27 May)

Battle of Stony Creek, June 5, 1813.

Battle of the Forty Mile Creek, June 8, 1813.

Fort Niagara, December 18/19 1813

Battle of Chippawa, July 5 1814

Battle of Lundy's Lane, July 25 1814

Siege of Fort Erie – 27 July, 21 September 1814

During the years 1813/14, the 1st Battalion, 8th Foot was one of the Regiments most heavily involved in the conflict and in consequence were reduced to a mere skeleton by its severe losses in the numerous engagements it had taken part in. Ordered to retire to Montreal after the siege of Fort Erie, the battalion was rewarded with the battle honour 'Niagara'.

Mara was finally discharged from the army on 22 March 1825, his conduct being noted as 'good'. He had served in the West Indies between 13 August 1808 and 17 April 1809 (capture of Martinique), in addition to his service in Canada.



AMERICAN VICTORY AT FORT GEORGE, MARA WOUNDED

On May 25, American batteries along the Niagara river and at Fort Niagara opened fire on Fort George damaging or destroying almost all the buildings within its walls. Only the casemates within the Fort's walls themselves offered protection for the garrison's soldiers, women and children. This bombardment signalled to the British commander, Brigadier General John Vincent that an invasion was imminent. Vincent had 1300 men at his disposal, approximately 1000 Regulars from 8th and 49th Foot, Newfoundland Fencibles, Glengarry Light Infantry, the balance men from Canadian Militia and Indian's.

On May 26, Dearborn began to embark his troops, numbering 5000. The plan decided upon was that the light troops would first land on the lakeshore led by Winfield Scott and Benjamin Forsyth, and secure the beach head for the rest of the brigades to land. The early next morning on May 27, the American fleet with the invasion force under cover of a heavy fog. With no breeze in the air it was slow moving for the flotilla. The fog soon lifted to reveal that the Americans were on the move. While the element of surprise had been removed, Vincent still did not know where the Army would land. With only 1300 troops available and unable to cover all possible landing spots, Vincent chose to withdraw troops from the lakeshore and concentrated them on the river. He chose wrong.

Once the landing boats left the American flotilla and it became obvious that the lakeshore was their destination, Vincent scrambled to re-direct troops back to Lake Ontario. The light troops, two companies of the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and one of the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles and militia were dispatched from his force to meet the American landing. Rushing into action, the Canadians charged the disembarking Americans under Scott with the bayonet. While climbing out of his boat, Scott himself was forced to dodge a bayonet from a Glengarry, but falling into the cool waters of Lake Ontario. As wave after wave of thousands of US regulars landed the Canadian troops were slowly beaten back and retired to a position held by the 8th Regiment. Further attempts were made, this time by the 49th Regiment and militia, to halt the American advance but without success.



Outnumbered and in the process of being outflanked, Vincent decided to make a hasty evacuation of Fort George. So fast was the pullout and under constant bombardment from Fort Niagara, that the women and children of the 49th and other corps were left behind in the casemates of the fort. To avoid the American army moving from the shores of Lake Ontario towards Fort George, Vincent retreated up the Niagara river to Queenston then cut north with detachments from Fort Erie and Queenston towards Burlington Heights, leaving the Niagara peninsula under US control. While Washington was

pleased with this success, the hope of the invasion was to destroy completely Vincent's small army leaving Upper Canada west of Kingston at the mouth of the St. Lawrence in the hands of the US. The US army then could deal with British on the Detroit river at their leisure. But this was not the case.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fort_George

Casualties at Fort George were; Americans 41 killed and 113 wounded. British 52 killed, 44 wounded, 262 missing/prisoner (approx 50% of these wounded). 246 of the casualties were from the 8th Foot.

BATTLES POST FORT GEORGE

A full write up of all the battles the 1st Battalion 8th Foot were involved in would take many pages so links to some of the larger battles that it appears Mara would have served at are as follows:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stoney_Creek

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capture_of_Fort_Niagara

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chippawa

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Lundy%27s_Lane

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Fort_Erie



Condition GVF, minor wear. Sold with copy service papers and muster extracts. Digital copies of Mara's musters 1811-1815 and other research, including the Regimental history, can be emailed to buyer. A fine and scarce 1812 War casualty medal.