

[HTTP://WWW.IAW.ON.CA/~JSEK/1812MAAS.HTM](http://www.iaw.on.ca/~jsek/1812maas.htm)

It is with great pleasure that I have been able to include a letter that was written by an American soldier who fought during the War of 1812. Of even greater surprise and to my amazement, was the realization that this letter was written during the actual Siege of Fort Erie. I intend to supply more information about this timely combatant as the information is made available to me. For now, I thank the current holder of this letter, Robert Maas, who is the writer's great-great-grandson, for allowing me to publish it on the Internet.

As you will notice there are portions of the letter marked with " _?_" which indicate an unreadable word or phrase. Hopefully we will be able to fill in these blanks. Any comments you may wish to pass on to Mr. Maas may be done so through me. So for now, seat back and allow yourself to be taken back in time during one the most bloodiest battles of the War of 1812.

Other original letters

From the time I joined the Army till after the Battle of Bridgewater which took place on the 25th day of July 1814, just before the Falls of Niagara and through which I was mysteriously preserved, when to _?_ over nothing but death was inevitable. I will begin by Comm _?_ narrative at that funeral immediately after that battle from what is _?_ in the eastern allies, Supposed to arrive from the _?_ of the particles of fluids and the facility with which they slid over each other it is infered that they have. We proceeded up the river to Fort Erie which is directly _?_ (across?) _?_ from Buffalo on the Canadian Shore and stand some 20 or 30 rods _?_ the lake which I think _?_ _?_ on the 1st of August this _?_ surrendered to our men on the 3rd of the preceding month and contained in its enclosure about 1/4 of an acre of ground prepared for a short _?_ with a large stone building two stories high.

Our Army being now considerably reduces and our men somewhat worn down by fatigue in consequence of the recent engagement that had passed through. It was deemed a matter of prudence to leave ourselves effectually by additional fortifications against any sudden attack that might be made on us by the enemy, we accordingly in _?_ ourselves by throwing up a strong breastwork commencing at the fort and moving westward to a considerable distance and terminating at a small inn directly on the margin of the lake and which by the Canadians was called Snake Hill on which we placed a number of _?_.

Townsend Battery after the name of its commander from the fort southward to the lake and threw up another breastwork of equal strength with the former, both of which together with the original fort we fortified with heavy pieces of cannon around the whole of our breastwork on the outside all dug wide and deep ditch and yet again on the outside of that we placed two rows of pickets or combs of trees sharpened at the top ends and laid closely together which would greatly stand the _?_ of the enemy, should there be an attack made upon us. We now viewed ourselves tolerably well secured against any onset that might occur, being well fortified on the east, north and west and having the lake on the south. We had nothing to fear from the quarter as the victorious Lexy? had swept the enemy from its surface the _?_ year.

Having accomplished this arduous labour we continued to make such additional repairs and preparations in the recent Battles of Chippewa and Bridgewater by an additional supply of troops. Troops came on after us and threw up batteries on the bank of the river about a half mile below an encampment. It had now got to be about the 12th day of the month when on _?_ came from the commander of the British army which left it discretionary with our commanding officers to surrender

as prisoners of war to his Majesty's forces or run the risk of being taken by storm and given up to the savage fury of their Indian allies without any protection.

Our commander and chief who was General Brown thinking it was proper not to notice of this ___?___ immediately returned the messenger without an answer upon this they commenced a heavy cannonading which continued about a day and a half without any ___?___ while our men in return gave them as good as they sent. This cannonading commenced on the 13th day in the morning and continued till noon the next day, which it came to be a temporary ___?___ this circumstance produced so small a degree of surprise on ___?___ in our minds as we expected nothing but a continuance of their shots and shells till we were completely ___?___ to surrender or they had fairly proved that their efforts were unavailing.

We concluded ___?___ that in conformity to the message they had previously sent that their suspension of hostilities for the present were only in order to their consenting and maturing plans of ___?___ by which they might more effectively accomplish their grand object as we were fully informed by those afterwards fell into our hands as prisoners and also by a number of deserters. We however on our fort were not idle. Everything was put into the best possible preparations and all stood ready and waiting. Everything now remained still and tranquil till about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning of the 15th when our camp was alarmed by the firing of musketry by our picket guard #4 which was stationed west of our encampment on the lake shore ___?___

It was discovered that a large body of the enemy were advancing and ___?___ to get within the encampment by wading through the water around the end of the breastwork which might easily be done as the water is shallow and the bottom is a flat rock which extends to a considerable distance into the lake, their widest design in this undertaking was to throw us in confusion and thereby give easy ___?___ to those that might come upon us from other quarters but in this they were badly disappointed for no sooner did they come within the reach of our guns and canisters, when such a destruction fire was opened upon them from Townsends Battery that many poor fellows found a watery grave while the rest retreated with great precipitation.

Agreeable with their plan of attack another strong body came upon the northwestern part of our encampment and endeavoured to try to gain the inside by leaping the breastwork. but immediately coming in contact with the rows of pickets we had placed and the deep ditch ___?___ their ___?___ was greatly ___?___ while the bellowing thunders of the Townsend bottom moaned down upon them in such a ___?___ way, together with the fire of our infantry, as laid them in heaps and ___?___ the ditch with the mangled bodies of the dead and wounded, by this time another party made an attack upon the east end of our encampment and by means of scaling ladders had gained an entrance into the old fort. There was now work enough to be done the ___?___ which the enemy had met with had greatly increased their courage.

The contest was blood and ___?___ in the extreme. So that one detachment after another was taken from the left of our regiment to ___?___ the ___?___ occasioned by our wounded, as the area of the fort was so small but few of our men could be brought into action at once. It was in this contest that poor Abel Sanderson fell victim to fate of was in the act of stepping from the door step of the stone building which stood in the fort, he was shot through the heart by a British soldier and fell dead. I would here stop and notice a circumstance relative to my own preservation which everytime it occurs to my memory raises in my mind a glow of admiration at the interposition of that overruling providence after time, though apparently in a very simple manner turns aside the arrows of death from those earthly existence.

It designs to prolong and which I feel lays me under a debt of gratitude to my ___ of other officers, which our ___ only ___ killed and 50 or 60 wounded. I might then mention in which we found many of those who suffered by the explosion but the relation would be to heart sickening, therefore I forebear. I will now notice the manner in which the enterprise was undertaken and the reward that every brave fellow should receive, who would voluntarily engage in it accordingly to the information we received from those who were taken prisoners and also deserters.

The Commander in Chief of the British Forces made the proposition that every man who would freely offer his services to go and ___, the strong hold of the yankey's. I should receive as a compensation of his valor, on pint of good Old Jamaican Rum, accordingly 1500 brave men presented themselves, who declared that in honour to their King and in view of the reward to be conferred, they were ready to engage in the undertaking, however hazardous, but the wisdom with which their plan of operations has been concerted and unguarded condition in which they expected to find us at the finest point of attack, left no doubts in their minds that the expedition they were about to engage in could ___ fail to success but ___ for them ___ and had

Disappointment must have filled the mind of their companions they had left in the camp. When only about 300 men returned to tell the sad tale, that so many of there comrades were left behind and deprived of the privelege of setting down around the flowing ___ to congradulate each other on the successful issue of their undertaken and to the drinking to the health of their king and country.

I now pass to the 17th day of the month. A day which to me, in which my soul was translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear son. Is the most memorable period of my life, our cousins Ralph Bingham and Simeom Laitham of Springfield received their death wounds. The British now continued firing and we found it necessary in order to prevent their shots from making our line to throw up some additional works of defense, in doing this, we were under the necessity of going outside the breastwork to get materials and in which ___ our cousin Bingham and Laitham was employed, while they stood facing each other, from a enemy a cannon shot took off the right leeg of one and the left leg of the other, they both fell together amputation was attended as soon as possible but poor fellows they survived for a short time.

The 17th day now arrived , nothing extraordinary occurred only now and then 18 and 24 lb shot would plow through our encampment and would find a lodging place in the bottom of the lake a chain shot would pop over our heads making a strange kind of dismal music by its revolution. I now come to mention the circumstances of my own catastrophe. For the greater security of our own tents and baggage against the effects of the British balls.

I now come to mention the circumstances if my own catastrophe . For the greater security of our own tents and baggage against the effects of the British balls, we had placed all our movables near the breastwork while in the rear of our tents and in the open range of our enemy's guns our men were under the necessity of lighting up their fires to perform the labour of cooking (cook- Washington C). It had now got to be in the dusk of the evening and it so happened that I was standing at one of the fires which formed a very desirable object for the enemy to aim at, they reasonable supposed that our men would be round the fire in considerable number, a soldier on the opposite side of the fire took up a kettle in which he had been preparing food for his supper, at the same time I lifted one from the side on which I stood in order to set it in the place from where he took his, when just at that moment while my arms were expended in the act of letting down the kettle the enemy let go a 20lb shot which came over the breastwork, struck the ground and as it glanced, struck my right arm in the elbow joint and

the left arm just above, for a few seconds I did not know what had taken place, as the wind produced by the ball,blew the ashes into my hair and eyes which prevented me from seeing, and as I experienced not the least pain by the infliction of the wounds. But when I came to see what was done, what my feelings were I leave you to imagine if possible by me they must forever remain under _?_.

O'God I said are both my arms gone. I stopt I could say no more, A thousand thoughts.

From here, Mr. Maas tells me the next couple of pages becomes impossible to read. Also the first and last pages of this nine page letter are missing. The letter were recently conserved which has help to improve the reading of this fine document. Given some time I hope to have more included.