

## Militia Rolls in the Wellesley Assessment Rolls, 1864 – 1868

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Militia rolls appeared in the tax assessment records beginning in 1864 as a result of the “Act Respecting the Militia,” enacted by the provincial legislature in October 1863. All able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 59 inclusive were to be enrolled in the "Non-Service Militia," and from these, each County was also required to enroll one or more battalions of "Service Militia," which could be called up for paid active service. To determine membership – which was involuntary – in the Service Militia, names were drawn by lot from the assessment roll of all males between the ages of 18 and 59. Exemptions were available for the infirm, students, members of pacifist religions, and workers in essential services such as physicians, firemen and teachers.

The Service battalions were to be filled as far as possible by men of the **First Class** (those between the ages of 18 and 44 inclusive who were single, or widowed without children); then by men of the **Second Class** (same ages, but married or widowed with children); then, if necessary, by men from the **Reserve** (those between ages 45 and 59 inclusive).

Enrolment in the Service Militia was for three years, after which a new lottery would be held. Those men whose names were not selected for the Service Militia would remain in the Non-Service Militia. Members of the Service Militia could be called out for up to six day's drill a year, for which they would be paid fifty cents a day.

The underlying reason for the 1863 Militia Act was the American Civil War. The Canadian provinces were worried that when the war was over, the United States might use its huge armies to annex Canada. This concern led to the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences of 1864 that laid the groundwork for Confederation. A new Militia Act passed in 1868 abandoned the complicated scheme of the 1863 Act; therefore there are no more militia rolls from 1869 on.

The reason why some men are not assigned to any of the three classes would be that they either were too old (i.e. 60+), or had an exemption. In some cases, other men are listed in addition to, or instead of, the landowner/tenant. These would presumably be renters or boarders living on that property, or since many of the taxpayers were farmers, the extra names could also refer to hired hands living in the farmhouse or in a bunkhouse.

There was also a Volunteer Militia, such as the Crosshill Infantry Company. These men were also assigned to classes of the Non-Service Militia. Thus they were considered as being in two militias at the same time! For instance, in the 1868 assessment roll, Western section:

- No. 24 (Captain) William Barbour (spelled Barber by the assessor, but the address - Concession 7, Lot 12 - confirms that it's the William Barbour whose property is shown in the 1881 Atlas) is listed as Second Class, i.e. married.
- No. 258 (Bugle Major) George Oakley, age 49, is listed as Reserve (i.e. over age 45); and living on the same property are two First Class men (i.e. bachelors), Robert Wightman and William Rothwell.

It is possible that the rationale was that, was that if anyone quit the Volunteer Militia, they would still be in the Non-Service Militia and liable for the compulsory lottery.