

# “Mollie Barnes is my name ...”: a New England Daughter Identified

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## *Appendix C: The Death of Joseph Barnes & the Campaign of 1759*

The year 1759 proved to be the turning point for the British and the beginning of the end of French power in North America. Near the end of July, a British force of 11,000 men under Gen. Amherst took Fort Carillon (renamed Fort Ticonderoga) with the loss of only 5 men.<sup>1</sup> This is, perhaps, too early in the season for Joseph’s death as his probate records begin in the latter part of October. In addition, Joseph’s Connecticut/New York descendants believed that he was present at the taking of Quebec with Gen. Wolfe and, if so, he would have been one of the few British-American casualties on the Plains of Abraham.<sup>2</sup> We have not been able to find a listing of the names of those casualties but the date of the battle, Thursday, September 13, 1759, is certainly perfect for a probate package that began on Oct. 22. The battle was the culmination of a three-month siege and lasted about fifteen minutes.

Other conflicts of that same late summer and autumn included the capture of the fort at Crown Point from the French (just north of Ticonderoga) and a campaign of destruction of small French settlements along the St. Lawrence during August.

“... [Wolfe] spent the summer striving without success to break the French lines below Quebec. In frustration, he turned his American Rangers loose to ravage the countryside. This calculated policy of terror would, he hoped, bring Montcalm’s army out of its entrenched position to give battle. He was convinced that the superiority of his regiments made victory in such an engagement certain, but Montcalm refused to abandon his position. All he had to do was hold on, and beat back the enemy attacks. At summer’s end the British would be forced to withdraw down river.

“The Rangers, aided by detachments of regulars, set about their grim work with enthusiasm. Four thousand well-built stone homes and manor houses went up in flames all along the river. In late August Jeremiah Pearson, soldier in the Massachusetts forces, wrote in his diary: ‘the Raingers and the lite Invitery embarked aboard the flatbotum Boats and went down the river about 30 miles and Lay in the Brig that night. Ye 23 we went on Shore for to set the houses on fire we had an ingagement with the French and kild and Scupled 16 of them and came all the way up by Land and got Sheep and geese and hens a nuf of them and set all the houses on fire as we came.’ ... The Canadians ... fought savagely in defense of their homes, despite heavy losses.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1759: *The Year Britain Became Master of the World* by Frank McLynn, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004, p. 154

<sup>2</sup> “Boyle’s *Journal of Occurrences in Boston*”, NEHGR, Vol. 84, pp. 148-149 in which there appears a lengthy quote on Oct. 15 from someone who was present saying that besides Wolfe, 9 officers, 4 sergeants & 44 privates were killed out of a force of 4,800 regulars.

<sup>3</sup> *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760* by William John Eccles, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969, p. 180

It is my sincere hope that Joseph was not a part of the ill-fated and bloodthirsty group of Rogers' Rangers who attacked the St. Francis Indians in late September in their settlement on the St. Lawrence River, massacred the inhabitants, killed their priest and made off with the gold and silver religious items in their chapel. Thankfully, it is unlikely that he was a participant in this carnage as the survivors of the company did not make it back to civilization to tell their tale until November. Most of their number had died of starvation and exhaustion on the return journey so his name would not have been listed among the dead until that time. Also, his name does not appear in books and articles that detail the event.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *White Devil: A True Story of War, Savagery and Vengeance in Colonial America* by Stephen Brumwell, DaCapo Press, 2006; *Cursed in New England: Stories of Damned Yankees* by Joseph A. Citro & Jeff White, p. 47 forward