

North Bay Old Home Week, 1925 and 1935

by Dr. Francoise Noel, Nipissing University

“228th Battalion Was Model Fighting Unit,” *The Nugget*, 4 August, 1925, p. 2.

228th Battalion Was Model Fighting Unit

Three Years on Active Service to Credit of Northmen.

Any special day of remembrance of the Great War must have for citizens of North Bay and vicinity proud yet bitter memories of its own battalion, the 228th, which left North Bay in the early days of 1916 and returned in 1919 with three years of distinguished war service to its credit. So today when the returned men and citizens in general pay tribute to the fallen heroes of the Great War there are recalled stories of the heroism, the sacrifice and the loyalty of the “men of the North.” Some returned and some lie in foreign fields.

Organization of the 228th was authorized on the first of March, 1916 and recruiting of the unit was commenced about the middle of the month. Three months later the 228th left North Bay 950 men strong for training at Camp Borden. Ninety per cent of the men and officers of the battalion came from North Bay, and places along the T.&N.O. and from as far north as Moose Factory and James Bay. The recruiting officers had among their new soldiers 18 Indians from Moose Factory, who had never before seen any modern methods of transportation beyond their dog teams. When the battalion was later changed to a

railway troop these Indian soldiers were among the battalion’s most valued members.

The chief officers of the battalion during its organization in the north and its training in Camp Borden and Toronto were Colonel A. Earchman, commanding officer, Major McKee, second in command; Major W.W. Ferguson, Major Lowe, Capt. Dierey? And Capt. ?piers, company commanders.

The battalion was in camp at Camp Borden from June until October when it was transferred to winter camp in Toronto, where two companies were stationed at Shaw Street School and two at Gibbons Street School. The officers and headquarters were housed at Trinity College. Training continued at Toronto until February, when an order came from Ottawa changing the unit from infantry to railway troops.

Reorganized For Service

On February 17, 1917, the battalion left the Toronto camp for St. John, N.B., where they spent three days in barracks before being shipped on the Missanabie, which has since been destroyed, and landed in Purfleet? Camp on February 28. In this camp the battalion was re-equipped and re-organized for service in France. The headquarters staff of the re-organized unit were Colonel A. Earchman, commanding officer, Major W.W. Ferguson, second in command; Major A.B. Colville, adjutant; Capt. W. Maglaery, Q.M.; W.H. Roberts, chief engineer; Capt. Kip?, paymaster, and Major R.B. Smith, transport officer. The company officers were ? Major George

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McNamara, commanding officer, Capt. Frid?, second in command; Subalterns ? J. Bourke, Davis and S. ? platoon commanders; No. Major D.W. Fraser, commanding officer, Major H.D. McNamara, ? in command, subalterns ? Russell Young, C. Cowan ? Dale, platoon commanders, Capt. Spiers, commanding officer; Subaltern Naunders, second in command, subalterns M. Crosby, ? Scallwood and Thomas, platoon commanders; No. 4, Major Lewis, commanding officer, ? Piers, second in command, subalterns W.J. Reed Lewis, No. 2, Treau, T. Willis and Thomas, platoon commanders.

The battalion arrived in France ? days before Vimy Ridge where in which the members took ? the maintenance of the broad ? lines between Boulogne and ?. Ten days later they were transferred to the fourth army area and took over the construction of all light railways in the Fourth Army area. This ? was continued until November 1917, when two companies were sent ? to Belgium in the Passchendaele fight and two companies remained in the Fourth Army area to ? after the first Cambrai. The ? companies Cambrai built six miles of railway and had traffic running into the Marconne in 24 hours. During the winter of 1917 and the spring of 1918 the battalion looked after the construction and maintenance of railways in the Fourth Army area. In the big retreat of March that year the battalion retired to Domleger and carried on the construction of broad gauge lines until July, 1918, when they were removed to the area in the rear of Amiens. Following the battle of Amiens the battalion looked after the construction of all light railways of the Fourth Army until Armistice, building in all 380 miles of line from August 1 until November 11.

After Armistice the battalion was left on maintenance until February when the men were removed to Etaples and there at ready for movement to England where they went into camp at Liverpool before breaking up.

Decorations ?

Outline of any fighting unit must be a mere shell which only those who participated can properly fill in the days of discomfort, of near death, of heroism, of sacrifice and death itself. It can be truthfully said that the officers and men of the 228th bore themselves in a manner befitting the sturdy north from whence they came. They returned home with 56 military crosses, 10 distinguished conduct medals and five meritorious medals among the decorations of the unit. Among those decorated were Colonel Earchman the commanding officer, who received the D.S.O., O.B.E., 1914 stars, Victory ? Medal, general service, Canadian militia long service and officers long service decorations; Major Fraser, second in command, who received the D.S.O., general service and victory medals; Major Ferguson, general service and victory medals; Major H. McNamara, general service and victory medals; Major Frid, general service and victory medals; Lieut. Jack Bourke, ? general service and victory medals; Lieut. Amos, M.C., general service and victory medals; Lieut. A. Smith, M.C. ? general service and victory medals.

The colors of the battalion which were deposited overseas in the chapel at Potters Har ? where the first German Zeppelin was brought down in April 1917, were brought to Canada in April, 1919, and placed in North Bay. The members of the 228th battalion have spread to the four winds. Major H. McNamara and Major

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Geroge McNamara formed the McNamara Construction Company of Sault Ste. Marie; Capt. Frid is with the Frid Construction Comapany of Hamilton; Mr. Amos is with the C.N.R. at Winnipeg, and Mr. He? is now contracting for himself in the west. The former commanding officer is with the Northern Developmnet Branch at Toronto and in this capacity often meets with former 228th men, who are holding their old positions in the towns of the north.