



Société d'histoire de Georgeville

Georgeville Historical Society

Newsletter – Spring 2014

DATES TO REMEMBER SUMMER 2014

Sunday, July 6

Annual General Meeting, preceded by the presentation of the Nathan Beach Award and a presentation on Dr. William McKendrick Keyes, the long-serving Georgeville doctor – 1863 to 1914 – led by the Rev. Dr. R. Deane Moffat.

Wednesday, July 30

A major summer event will be a Photo Fair to be held at the Murray Memorial Hall. You are encouraged to bring your photos of relevant images of Georgeville's past. It is planned to scan the photos and add them to the GHS archives. Watch notice boards and e-mails for more information.

Wednesday, August 13

A historical boat trip along three miles of lakeshore, led by Stephen Moore. \$25 per person, for members 16 and over only. Will be required to sign a waiver.

Reserve in advance by calling or e-mailing Judy Bachelder at (819) 847-2595 or judy.bachelder@gmail.com.

All Summer Long

Visit the beautiful and revitalized Bigelow Pioneer Garden any time during the summer.

METHODIST PREACHER WILLIAM SQUIRE

By John Boynton

Should not a man who for several years ministered to Georgeville's Methodists, preaching regularly in the red brick meeting house, be entitled to a place in our history?

“Forests and Clearings” records that William Squire was appointed to the Stanstead Circuit, of which Georgeville was a part, in 1833 and that during his four-year tenure he preached four times every Sunday as well as several times on week days.

From E.A. Collard's book, “Montreal Yesterdays”, we learn much more about William Squire. He came from England as a missionary to the black slaves in the West Indies. His work aroused the enmity of the slave owners and, after narrowly escaping death at the hands of an organized mob, he was assigned a military guard by the Governor of Santa Lucia. He also suffered from the unhealthy climate and a fever that lasted for months forced his removal to Quebec City where he slowly recovered.

He resumed his work, his first appointment being to the Shefford Circuit in the Eastern Townships. [In our files is a deed, dated 1827, for one acre of land in Bolton, purchased from Georgeville innkeeper Abraham Channel by a seven-man committee, led by Mr. Squire, for the building of a church.]

He was next sent to Quebec, then to Montreal, and then to Stanstead. There, he put in some hard months when crops failed and many were close to starving, green potato tops being all some had to eat. His house was raided nightly by thieves in search of food.

From Stanstead he went to Phillipsburg where, soon after his arrival, he was helping to barricade his stone church to serve as an arsenal against a threatened raid by “patriots” from Swanton, Vermont. The raiders were defeated at the battle of Moore’s Corners and the victorious volunteers were fed on salt pork and potatoes boiled by Mr. Squire in huge vessels inside his fortified church.

Later, he worked in Kingston and Toronto and, in 1891, was appointed Superintendent of Missions in Eastern Canada, and minister of the Wesleyan Chapel on Wellington Street in Montreal.

One Friday morning, he was called to the bedside of a man dying of cholera. Mr. Squire remained with him to “care both for the body and the soul” until he expired. On the following day, he himself fell ill with the same disease and died early Sunday morning. Mourners in seventy carriages followed his body to the newly-opened

Mount Royal Cemetery where his was the first burial to take place.

OOPS!

We must correct two errors that appeared in an earlier article about the Pioneers Memorial on Dufferin Heights. John Boynton, relying on a published list, wrote that Major William Boynton’s name is not on the monument. But, in fact, it is!

He also wrote that Captain John Boynton never lived in Stanstead Township. He has since found the captain and his family listed in the 1810 census of the southeast corner of the township, so he must have lived here for a few years before moving to Windsor.

NINE LOCAL MEN SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

(Part 1)



This year is, of course, the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War.

It was a brutal and devastating period, sometimes, ironically, described as “The Great War” and the “War to end all wars”. Nevertheless, Canada’s role in the war led to it being recognized as the country’s coming of age into true nationhood. It paid a heavy price: 240,000 young Canadians died, were wounded or went missing.

Of the more than 60,000 Canadians who sacrificed their lives, nine were local young men. We see the names of eight of them on the Georgeville cenotaph. And while we recognize their bravery and sacrifice, most of us really know little or nothing of their lives or their military service. Here is some background on these local heroes.

Ernest Lee Rollins

Lee Rollins was born in Georgeville in 1888, the oldest son of Clarence and Henrietta Rollins, who farmed the old Russell Rexford property on the road to Magog; later, the Silvester farm at the top of Austin Hill; and the Bly farm at Taylor Brook.

Growing up, he, of course, helped out on the family farm and probably “hired out” to other local farmers. He made at least one trip to Saskatoon to spend the summer in the grain fields. Along the way, he picked up the trade of carpenter, as he described himself when he enlisted on March, 1916, in the 117th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. The Battalion was based in Sherbrooke and drew primarily on young

men from the Eastern Townships. Many of these men had previously served in the part-time volunteer militia. When he went overseas, he was posted to the 24th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).



Private Ernest Lee Rollins

He probably arrived in France to take part in the final stages of the Battle of the Somme, but was stricken with a mortal disease which ended his life at the age of 29 in a casualty clearing station on February 21, 1917. His body rests in the Bruay Communal Cemetery Extension, Pas de Calais, France.

News of his death reached his family within a few days and a memorial service was held in St. George’s Church the following Sunday.



Remembrance Day ceremony, Georgeville, 2013

Arthur Lucas Silvester

Arthur Silvester, who was born in South Wales, came to the area with his family in 1899 at the age of eight. His parents, Mr and Mrs Harry Silvester, occupied the Quinn house which stood beside Taylor Brook.

One of the first Georgeville-born young men to enlist, his attestation papers were signed in Sherbrooke on January 28, 1916. He served in France with the 24th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, and in April, 1917, was wounded in battle. He recovered and continued to serve in the

trenches until he was killed in action at the age of 29, on August 27, 1918, with the war almost over.

According to the battlefield War Diary, an attack was launched at 10 a.m. on August 27 in spite of heavy machine gun fire and gas shells. Heavy losses were sustained. "The Battalion, despite this heavy opposition, pushed on and captured Mallard Trench, where a large number of machine guns, trench mortars and prisoners were captured." As the day wore on, they captured Cherisy, Occident Trench and advanced within about 150 yards of Ulster

and Union trenches. During the battle, one officer and 19 men, including Private Silvester, were killed.

Arthur Silvester was buried in the Wancourt British Cemetery, five miles south-east of Arras, France.

Harold Williams

Harold Williams did not appear to have any roots in Georgeville and, yet, in his attestation papers, completed on enlistment in Sherbrooke in December, 1915, he gave Georgeville as his current address. Born in Manchester, England, his cited his mother, Mrs. Louisa Williams of Montreal, as his next-of-kin.

He joined the 117th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, but, on posting overseas, was assigned to the 24th Battalion. He was killed in action in France on April 11, 1918, at the age of 18. The War Diary for April 11 reveals that at 6 a.m. “the enemy opened up a heavy bombardment of our front line which lasted throughout the day. At 9.30 a.m., a party of 80 Huns attempted to get into the left of “B” Company, but were driven off by our Lewis gun and rifle fire.” The enemy resumed its bombardment and at the end of the day 17 soldiers, including Harold Williams, were killed and 40 wounded.

His name is inscribed on the Vimy Memorial dedicated to the Canadians who died in France and have no known grave.

Thomas Ritchie Haward

Like Harold Williams, Thomas Haward had no apparent roots in Georgeville. However, an item in the Stanstead Journal of November, 1901, referred to “Tom Howard”, for several seasons the engineer on W.A.Murray’s steam launch and whose family occupied the Murray farmhouse for the summers. It may be assumed that Thomas Ritchie’s growing-up years were spent as a member of the village’s summer colony. That would explain why his name appears on the Georgeville cenotaph as well as on the Roll of Honour and the brass cross in St. George’s Church.

Thomas Haward enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Kingston, Ontario, on August 23, 1916, at the age of 18, after having already served for five months in the militia. Private Haward was attached to the 87th Battalion, CEF.

He was killed in action on November 12, 1917, in the trenches of Passchendaele at age 19. His name is engraved on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.

[I am indebted to Lorne Waid Jr. for much of the historical military information contained in this article. It will be concluded in the Fall issue of the Newsletter. Editor.]

NOTES

For the first time, this issue of the Newsletter is distributed digitally, i.e. to your e-mail address. We will, of course, continue to produce hard copies for mailing to those members who require this method of distribution. If you do receive a hard copy, but have an e-mail address, please let Judy Bachelder know.

Thank you.

The newsletter is accompanied by a membership renewal form. Please complete the form promptly and mail it with your membership fee or donation.

Stories and photos for future newsletters are always welcome.

Contact: davidcox@axion.ca.

This newsletter was prepared by David R. Cox.

Photographs by Judy Bachelder.