16   The Men on the Phoenix Cenotaph

by Al Donnelly

The Phoenix Cenotaph is located at the site of the old mining city of Phoenix, 8.5 kilometers east of the city of Greenwood. It stands as a lasting memorial to the fifteen brave men from Phoenix who paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War I. Perhaps as many as 100 men from Phoenix and the surrounding mining camps (most of them employees for the Granby Co., the major mining operator in the area) enlisted with the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force from 1914 to 1918. It was a time of intense patriotism and even those left behind had their own responsibilities in the war effort by raising tens of thousands of dollars for various patriot funds and the Red Cross.

When the war ended, plans for a memorial were drawn-up - but not finalized before the mines and area smelters were closed due mainly to the collapse of copper prices. The dismantling of the mines and the city of Phoenix itself was well underway when the owners of the Phoenix skating rink decided to sell the rink to a scrap dealer and use some of the proceeds of the sale to create a suitable memorial to preserve the names of 15 men who gave their lives for their country.

Charles M. Campbell, who worked for Granby in Phoenix as a mining engineer and surveyor, in an article published about that time, eloquently commented:

> *"A modest granite shaft now stands, at an elevation of 4,700 feet, on an outcrop of rock, beside the highest point on the roadway over the divide between Greenwood and Grand Forks. This is the only stone structure ever erected in Phoenix, and long after all the buildings have rotted away, the waste dumps and glory holes have been hidden by a new forest growth, and the deer have returned to their former haunts, this shaft will remain as a memorial not only to the men who gave up their lives in Flanders, but also to the place they came from."*

(Mr. Campbell's reminiscences of his 16 years in Phoenix can be found in the Boundary Historical Society's 3rd Report, originally printed in 1960.)

The names are forever engraved on this memorial - sacred and permanent. But who were these courageous men. Not warriors. Not martyrs. Just ordinary, hard-working men - with a special sense of duty and a love of their country.

James Cochrane

James Cochrane worked for the Granby Co. as a blacksmith and was remembered by everybody in Phoenix for his musical talent which was always in demand at parties and special occasions. James returned to his native Scotland when war broke out in Europe and enlisted in the British Army in Glasgow. He was engaged in munitions work and died in early 1916.

Joseph Fleming

Joseph Fleming was born September 28, 1885 at Kirkby-in-Furness, Lancashire, England. He worked as a timberman for Granby. He enlisted at Victoria in February 1916 and fought in the Army, with the Central Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 54th Battalion. Private Fleming was killed while storming Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. He was 31 years of age.

Elmo Raymond Geddes

Elmo Geddes was born August 25, 1895 at Winnipeg, Manitoba. He worked for Granby as an ore loader and in the machine shop as a blacksmith's helper. Elmo assisted in bringing the B.C. Interior Hockey Championship to Phoenix before enlisting in April 1916. He fought in the Army, Quebec Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 225th Battalion. Private Geddes was wounded in September 1918 and lost his left leg. He was evacuated first to England and then to Canada and died from his wounds on June 21, 1920. He received the Military Medal Citation. He was 24 years of age.

Oscar Gustafson

Oscar Gustafson was born August 11, 1885 at Orebro, Sweden and immigrated in 1911. He worked for many years at the Granby Co. as a trackman and miner. He enlisted at Victoria in April 1918 and fought in the Army, Alberta Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 31st Battalion. Private Gustafson died in France on October 14, 1918. He was 33 years of age.

Sydney Bernard Jennings

Sydney Jennings (he spelled his first given name with two "y"s, not with an "i" and "y" as engraved on the cenotaph) was born in 1890 at Reading, Berkshire, England. He worked for the Morrin-Thompson & Co. store as a grocery clerk. He enlisted at Victoria in November 1914 and fought in the Army, Central Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 15th Battalion. Private Jennings was killed at Ypres, Belgium on April 24, 1915. He was 24 years of age.

Anton Johnson

Anton Johnson was born January 17, 1887 at Wexio, Sweden and worked for Granby as a miner. His brother Axel also worked in Phoenix. Anton enlisted at Victoria in June 1918 and was assigned to the Army, Canadian Railway Troops. Sapper Johnson died at sea on the way to England on October 11, 1918. He was 31 years old.

James Campbell Kempston

James Kempston was born March 15, 1876 at Dublin, Ireland. He came to Phoenix in 1910 and worked as a policeman for the city, and as a cage tender for Granby. He had previous military experience with the British Army during the Sudan and South Africa campaigns. He enlisted at Victoria in November 1914 and fought with the Army, Central Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 15th Battalion. Corporal Kempston was reported missing in action and presumed dead on June 3, 1916, at Ypres, Belgium. He was 40 years of age.

John Lindsay

John Lindsay was born October 1, 1885 at Shotts, North Lanarkshire, Scotland and worked at the Morrin-Thompson Co. store as a clerk. He enlisted at Vernon in August 1916, one of 4 brothers to enlist. He was assigned to the Army, Canadian Army Medical Corps, 3rd Field Ambulance. Private Lindsay died November 6, 1917 in Belgium. He was 32 years of age.

Roy Angus McDonald

Roy McDonald (he spelled his surname with "Mc" and not "Mac" as was engraved on the memorial) was born August 9, 1896 at Peter's Road, Prince Edward Island. He worked for the Granby Co. as a carpenter's helper. He enlisted at Grand Forks, B.C. in January 1916 and trained in Vernon and England. He fought in the Army, Central Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 54th Battalion. Private McDonald was killed at Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. He was only 20 years old.

Private
Roy Angus McDonald

Duncan Daniel McMillan

Duncan McMillan (not "Dudley MacMillan" as was engraved on the cenotaph) was born January 13, 1889 in Glengarry County, Ontario and worked as a cook at Deane's Hotel in Phoenix. He enlisted at Vernon in May 1915 and fought in the Army, British Columbia Regiment of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles. Private McMillan died in France on July 5, 1918. He was 29 years of age.

Thomas Monahan

Thomas Monahan was born May 23, 1888 at Liverpool, England and worked for the Granby Co. as a mucker and brakeman. He enlisted in September 1914 at Val Cartier, Quebec and fought in the Army, Princess Patricia's Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 8th Battalion. Private Monahan died in France, on March 3, 1915. He was 26 years old.

John Armfield Parry

John Parry was born March 21, 1892 at Dyserth, Denbighshire, Wales. He worked for Granby at the Gold Drop mine as a mucker. He enlisted at Kamloops in January 1916 and fought in the Army, Western Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 47th Battalion. Lance Corporal Parry saw action at Passchendaele and died in France on April 29, 1918.

Lance Corporal
John A. Parry

James Pitpladdy

James Pitpladdy was born July 15, 1887 at Stainton, Lancashire, England and worked as a miner in Phoenix. He enlisted at Victoria in November 1914 and served in the Army, Central Ontario Regiment of the Canadian Infantry, 15th Battalion. Private Pitpladdy was killed in France on May 21, 1915. He was 27 years of age.

David Morice Pittendrigh

David Pittendrigh was born September 18, 1893 at Edinburgh, Scotland. He worked as a clerk for the local branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce and enlisted at Victoria in March 1915. He fought in the Army with the Canadian Pioneers, 3rd Division. Private Pittendrigh died in Belgium on May 2, 1916. He was only 22 years old.

Private
David Morice Pittendrigh
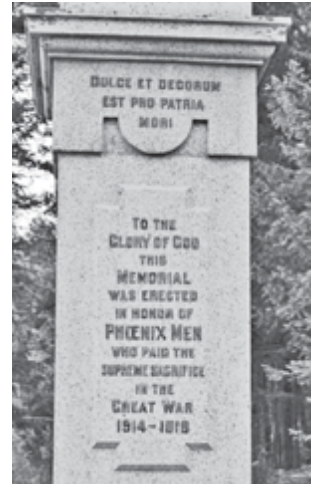
Frederick Samuel Wilkinson

*Private
Frederick Samuel
Wilkinson*

Frederick Wilkinson was born August 29, 1897 at Ulverston, Lancashire, England and worked for the Granby Co. for a very short time as a lad in the glory hole. His father worked for Granby in both Phoenix and Anyox, B.C. He enlisted at Vernon in November 1915 and served in the Army with the Canadian Pioneers, 3rd Division. Private Wilkinson was killed at Vimy Ridge on April 6, 1917. He had not yet reached his 20th birthday.

May this cenotaph stand forever and may our hearts and memories never forget these courageous men who sealed their patriotism with their young lives.

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori"

It is dear and glorious to die for one's country.

1937 - photo courtesy of the BC Archives, Royal B.C. Museum

Reference and Research Acknowledgements

Granby News for 1918 and 1919 published by the Granby Consolidated Mining, Smelting and Power Company, Ltd.

Phoenix Pioneer newspaper courtesy of the UBC On-line Library - B.C. Historical Newspapers

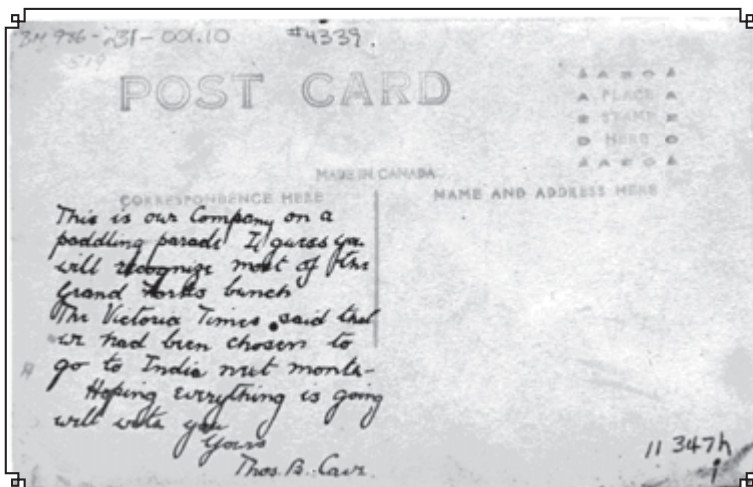Veterans Affairs Canada - Records and Collections - World War I - the Canadian Virtual War Memorial

Library and Archives Canada - Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force - World War I

1911 Census of Canada

POSTCARD FROM THE PAST

"Warden's Warriors" - Comox, B.C., 1916
Training for overseas (on the beach)

"This is our Company on a paddling parade. I guess you will recognize most of the Grand Forks bunch. The Victoria Times said that we had been chosen to go to India next month. Hoping everything is going well with you. Yours, Thos. B. Cave"

Thomas Bouchier Cave was killed at Somme, France, on November 11, 1916