

In the years 1912 and 1913, ominous menacing and threatening war clouds hung over the Continent of Europe. Peaceful citizens of the old historic Counties of Victoria and Haliburton never dreamed that in a few months their sons and daughters, kith and kin, would be involved in what became one of the worst holocausts of war the world has ever known.

Militarists and war lords of the British Empire and the colonies had not the faintest idea that when Sir Sam Hughes, a member of the Dominion of Canada parliament, was in Europe sizing up the threatening German menace in 1912 and 1913, that the Canadian Minister of Militia was storing up in the receptacles of his fertile mind a wealth of first hand knowledge of what had to be done in case world wide war unloosed its fierce tentacles of destruction across Europe and overflowed into Canada.

The accompanying comparatively short history links up the great and heroic band of soldiers known as the 109th Battalion. It was recruited and mustered in a few short months, following the authorization of Major General Sir Sam Hughes, on whose shoulders fell the gigantic task of organizing and despatching the First Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The story is timely in view of the fact a committee under the chairmanship of Jasper Forman has been engaged in planning a re-union of the 109th Battalion, to take place in Lindsay during the days of the Lindsay Central Exhibition, when it is anticipated upwards of 100 veterans will participate.

During the latter part of 1915, authority was received from Major-General Sir Sam Hughes to recruit the 109th Victoria and Haliburton Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. J. J. Havelock Fee, a native son of Omemee, with headquarters in Lindsay.

Four companies, A, B, C, and D were formed. "A" Company was under the command of Capt. V. Lancaster, with headquarters in Lindsay. "B" Company was under Major J. McCrae with headquarters in Omemee. "C" Company was under Major H. Hutchins with headquarters in Fenelon Falls, and "D" Company was under Major A. W. Gray with headquarters at Haliburton. Various platoons were scattered about the counties, attached to their own companies.

Training was in various centres until May, 1916 when the Battalion assembled in Lindsay, and went by special C.P.R. train to Barriefield for further training.

The Headquarters Staff at this time comprised the following: Officer Commanding, Lt. Col. J. J. H. Fee; Senior Major, Major R. H. Anderson (Tory Hill); Junior Major, Major F. J. Carew; Adjutant, Captain H. B. McConnell; Assistant Adjutant, Lt. A. W. Asseltine; Quartermaster, Captain D. C. Elliott; paymaster, Captain H. J. Williamson; Medical Officer, Captain J. McCulloch, later Captain H. O. Boyd; Chaplain, C. Williams.

The stretcher-bearers were

under Captain J. McCulloch, later Captain H. O. Boyd, and the signallers were under Lt. M. C. Brokenshire. The RSM was J. Allan.

The Battalion was very proud of the Machine Gun Section under Lt. Fred Ingold, as they carried off many prizes in competition with other units.



The Battalion orderly room sergeant was T. J. McFadden, the pay sergeant was M. Moynes, the quarter-master sergeant was Smithson, and the Medical sergeant was Duky McLean.

Jack Clemett, who is on the reunion committee, was the first enlistment having come up from Fort Henry with Lt. Col. Fee.

## **BRASS BAND**

The brass band under WO. Billy Heffernan was the pride and joy of the rank and file and was recognized as one of the best bands in Canada, to go overseas, and the mention of Col. Bogie's March will bring back memories of 50 years ago. The Battalion was favoured with one of the crack bugle bands under Sergeant Jimmy Clemett.

After training in Barriefield for a time the Battalion received word in July 1916 to proceed overseas. Subsequently the Battalion boarded the S. S. Olympic at Halifax and landed at Liverpool.

The unit boarded a special train and landed in Oxney Farms in Hants, near Borden, where it was under canvas for a while and then route marched a distance of about six miles to Bramshott. After a sojourn they moved to Whitly camp.

In the meantime the unit was called upon for drafts to reinforce the 20th., 21st and 38th. Battalions and some personnel went to other units. Finally the unit was broken up in Witly and the majority of the remaining were transferred to the 124th Battalion.

One of the momentous events in the history of the 109th Battalion took place when the battalion colours were presented to the Unit by Sir John and Lady Eaton, Lady Eaton having been the former Miss McCrae of Omemee.

Maj. Gen. Sir Sam Hughes was present for the event. The colours were afterwards presented to the officials of the United Church at Omemee where they are still on view. The presentation of the colours took place May 24th. 1916.

Many gallant soldiers of the 109th Battalion paid the supreme sacrifice, particularly at Vimy Ridge and the Somme, where casualties were quite heavy.

Members of the Victoria and Haliburton unit ranked high in the estimation of the officers both at home and overseas. Men of the Battalion recognized that they were free Canadians, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in their own way, free to stand for what they thought was right, and free to oppose what they thought was wrong. May their memory ever remain green and be long cherished in the hearts of the present generation and generations to come.

Curling lost two good enthusiastic players in the past week. George "Blutcher" Scott passed away at Fenelon Falls and Jack Bellamy, of Lindsay was called by death in a Toronto hospital. Scott, who was well known as an Assistant Lockmaster at the Falls and at Bobcaygeon, was a consistent curler and he was a patient and successful fisherman. He took part in many a curling match and helped to make the game popular.