

Many veterans of the army will remember such names as Valcartier and Pettawawa where hundreds of tents marked the training grounds of the old 45th. Regiment of Victoria and Haliburton. Comparatively few veterans remember the year when the old and famous historic regiment tented at Sturgeon Point on what was nicknamed "the Plains of Abraham".

Fifty-five years ago, in 1910 to be exact, four Companies camped on the shore of Sturgeon Lake at the Point. Most of the trek was made by passenger boats from Lindsay.

Those were the days when the regimental men wore the colourful uniform of red tunics and blue trousers; the days when men rolled out thin blankets on the turf or sand. There were no floored tents to rest the weary bones, following hours of hard drilling.

Col. Robert Sylvester was commandant, and he was want to inspect the lines, tents, and general equipment, as well as the deportment of the "lads" from his vantage point sitting on the back of his favourite spotted pony.

Col Sylvester was a tall, well built soldier who had considerable experience in militia matters. Other officers included Captain J. A. Williamson, second in command, and the Quarter Master general was George Foster.

There were many familiar faces in the ranks including Jack Clemett, one of the originals in the 109th. Battalion in World War I. Young Clemett had an interesting career as a member of the militia. Following his training in 1910 at Sturgeon Point, and subsequent camps, he was one of the first to enlist for active service when Sir Sam Hughes sounded the clarion call to arms in 1914.

He was assigned to the position of batman to the late Col. Havelock Fee, O.C. of the Victoria and Haliburton Battalion and he followed and worked with Col. Fee in various spots in France, especially with the Forestry Battalion of which Col. Frank Carew was the chief officer with Col. Fee as second in command. The Forestry Corps did yeoman service in a number of scattered sections in the theatre of war in France.

Diverting from the days of volunteers and the days of war it is interesting to chronicle the fact the then young Clemett once lived in Omemee where he met Havelock Fee, that he also worked in Toronto and that he joined the railwaymen's unit in Lindsay where he fired the old time steam locomotives under the eagle

eyes of such engineers as Tom Wilkinson, Ralph Clarke, Jack McMahon, Sandy Laidlaw, and others.

Those were the days when firemen were the big chore-boys, shovelling the heavy coal from the tender into the fire box, the days when many a front end brakeman boiled a strong tea by placing the kettle or pot on the hot coals just inside the firebox; the days when some engineers and firemen poached eggs on a sizzling end of a shovel; the days when firemen were literally cooked with the hot blast of the fire in the summertime, and almost frozen when water from the big tower spouts filled and overflowed in the winter months, at times saturating the poor fireman. It was all in a day's work.

Those were the days if there was a double-header, the fireman often had to walk back to the engineer in the second engine to tell him not to move the mogul, as he was going under the locomotive to carry out some necessary inspection or repair. However—according to Jack Clemett, they were the good old days when men were men and times were rough and tough.

“The spirit of friendship was high and I think the railway men shared each other’s woes if necessary and shared each other’s joy”, said Mr. Clemett. “What a change to-day”, he added as he shrugged his shoulders and his face took on a big smile.