

Speech to Genealogical Society - 11 Apr. 91

(re Maybelle asking me to speak - ? linking G'y with Military)

I have had a limited interest in Genealogy as I acquired some info from my G'pa King who was born in Essex County in the UK. I say limited as I was a growing boy with little interest in learning of family history. How one regrets this in later years: Too soon we grow old, too late we grow wise. I am not going to say much about my family except to inform you that my great grandfather George King, a baker, settled in Gravenhurst upon immigrating to Canada in the 1870s. He had three sons, all of whom became butchers, settling in Orillia, Beaverton & Uxbridge. My G'pa was James Charles the one who settled in Uxbridge. His son Charles Percy was my father and he too followed the butcher trade. My sister and I both became school teachers although I did help my father in the slaughtering side of the business on some occasions as I grew up. On my mother's side my ancestry is English from the Midlands, Irish from Limerick and Belgian from Louvain. I have visited my Great-great grandfather's grave in a small Essex village, Great Bardfield and I have a clipping of his brother's death on a farm there which the family had run back in the time of Henry VIII. I would like to go back and do some tracing but I am getting a bit too long in the tooth.

When Maybelle Cowin asked me to speak she suggested that maybe I could do something in relating my knowledge of military affairs, especially Artillery, with the genealogy of some persons in it locally. So I thought of one person and then one family of three generations who contributed much time and effort in civic and military affairs of the Town of Cobourg.

John Henry Dumble was born in Ireland in 1829. His parents and family emigrated to Canada in 1844 and settled in Cobourg. His father, Thomas, was a Capt. in the Royal Engineers and was given the task of being a commissioner to settle the Maine/Canada



Boundary dispute and then of surveying a railway route through the Maritimes and to Montreal. Young John attended him in these tasks, then came back to Cobourg, went to College and became a Professional Engineer. His career involved him in taking the soundings for the Victoria Bridge in Montreal, in becoming the Engineer of the Grand Trunk Rwy, in being appointed Chief Engineer for the Cobourg-Peterboro Rwy and in surveying the road from Cobourg to Hastings in 1870. At age 32 he began to study Law with the Hon. James Cockburn and for many years they were partners. In Cobourg, he<sup>he</sup> served as Police Magistrate and held the office of Master in Chancery. Amid all this he became an officer in the local Militia, reaching the rank of Capt.

On 17 March 1866 the Brigade Major of the Militia received word to form a Battery of Garrison Artillery so he called on Capt. Dumble to form such a unit to be part of a force to combat the threat of a raid by the Fenians, an Irish group formed in the US to take over Canada and make it a Republic. In no time Capt. Dumble had his quota. Many men of the local Highland Co. of Militia volunteered for the Art'y. There were ~~to~~ other officers, Lieut. V. I. Stanton and John D. Armour, later Chief Justice of Ontario. (pic in Crt. rm.) I will not go into the actions of the Battery (or Company) except to say they went to Toronto, did Guard duty at the Fort and later were part of an Honour Guard at the funeral of the Queen's Own Riflemen killed at the battle of Ridgeway. They came home to a tumultuous welcome in Victoria Hall.

Capt. Dumble remained in command and brought the unit up to a high standard of efficiency, never missing a parade until he retired in 1890 when he turned over the ~~Ex~~ Bty to Capt. David McNaughton. At the closing banquet Capt. Dumble was toasted as the Father of the Battery which under his leadership had become the best in the Dominion.

(Capt. Ds home, his father's home, his son Capt. Wilfred)



Now let us turn to the MacNachtan family

Edmund Alexander MacNachtan was born in Scotland in 1825. The family emigrated to Canada and settled in Newcastle, operating a country store. (like McIntosh's) Edmund began a newspaper there but later moved to Cobourg. (home is NE corner of George/Buck) He was Editor of the Cobourg Sentinel. He joined the Militia and his name is recorded on the 1865 paylist of the Highland Company of Volunteer Militia. When Capt. Dumble organized the Cobourg Battery Edmund joined and was give the rank of Sgt. Later he was made BSM and finally was commissioned. He proceeded to make a name for himself as an expert rifle shot. He took part in matches in such diverse places as Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec. His prowess won him a place on the Overseas Team competing at Wimbledon in England where he won the Governor-General's gold medal and the Prince of Wales trophy. The Cobourg World of 1877 stated that he was the best shot in the Dominion and had won about fifty prizes. Each summer he attended camp with the Battery and also the training period in Cobourg. The unit fired their guns from Veller's Hill at a cask 1200 yds in the lake. When they demolished the target they fished out the staves and marched back into town led by their piper.

If the Militia was his avocation his regular position kept him busy for he was the Clerk of the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham from 1863 to 1891. He was <sup>also</sup> busy with the affairs of St. Andrew's Church where he was on the first Board of Managers and acted as Sunday School Superintendant for several years. He retired from the Militia at the same time as Capt. Dumble but continued at his civilian employment until his death in 1891. He was given full military honours at his funeral on July 25th.



The Counties' Council appointed his son Neil F. MacNachtan as Clerk in his place. Neil had a distinguished career both as a civilian and as a military man. He and his brother E.A. jr both joined the Cobourg Garrison Battery. Neil followed the forte of his father for he early became an expert competitor in rifle matches in Canada and abroad, winning many prizes as had his father. Both brothers served as Lieutenants. In 1892 they took the Bty to Halifax and won the Governor-General's Cup in the big gun competition (64 pdrs). The next year they went to the School of Military Instruction in Quebec City to complete their qualifications as Lieutenants. When Capt. David McNaughton resigned command of the CGA because of ill health in 1893 Neil was promoted to Capt. and given command. This year he and E.A. went to the Town Council and asked for a grant of \$50.00 to buy new helmets for the Bty; the Council gave \$25.00. This year also saw them win the Governor-General's Cup, scoring 238 out of 260 points with 32 batteries competing.

At a meeting in Neil's office a Military Club was formed with him as Vice President and Ed as Secretary-Treasurer. Neil was also elected Vice President of the Ontario Artillery Association. July 1st 1885 was a momentous occasion - the Bty. at 7 a.m. fired a 21 gun salute from the end of the pier, then Neil used the gun, an 18pdr, to start the boat races. That year Capt. MacNachtan was on a delegation to Ottawa to try to get an Armoury and repairs to the harbour. In 1897 the two brothers took the Bty. by steamer to the Isle of Orleans for practice camp. The Cobourg World reported them as the Star Company of the Province, carrying everything before them and securing all the best prizes. This year ~~xxxx~~ also saw them sponsoring a Minstrel Show. To promote this the Captain marched with the minstrels clad in white costumes along King St. at noon, led by the Band of the 40th Battalion, the Infantry and persons carrying banners and placards advertising the show. In 1898 Neil was gazetted Major and Edmund Captain and again the Bty. won the GGS Cup. Four members went to the



South African War and returned next year after their service expired.

In 1901 after 33 years Maj. Neil F. MacNachtan retired from the CGA and took over command of the 14th Field Battery<sup>of Port Hope</sup> which was moved to Cobourg a year later. Capt. F. A. MacNachtan took over the CGA. Two years later the Major had so improved the 14th that, from being last in the Dominion in 1901, it moved up to be second, even beating the RCHA in the competitions. In 1904 at practice camp in Deseronto it placed first. This year the Major even found time to write a training manual 'A Guide for the Duties of the Canadian Field Artillery.'

Two years later (1906) there was another change of command: Major N. F. MacNachtan was promoted to Lt. Col. to command the 10th Field Brigade, F. A. to be Major OC the 14th Bty. and Major John Odell took over the CGA. In all this action Neil must have attended well to his duties as Counties' Clerk for the Council presented him with a fur coat in appreciation of his work. This year (1907) he gave a lecture on the topic 'The Defence of Cobourg' which was reported at some length in the newspaper. In 1909 he was in charge of the 10th Fde camp. This was held in Cobourg in the big field North of where General Foods factory is now located between Ontario and William Sts. The following year he was elected President of the PCAA for the Dominion of Canada.

His military career was crowned with two honours in 1911. He was chosen to lead the Artillery contingent to the coronation of King George V and his former command, the Cobourg Heavy Bty, won the Heavy Gun competition under Major Odell. The second honour was the fact that on Monday Nov. 27th he was presented by the Gov. Gen., the Duke of Connaught, with the decoration 'Commander of the Victorian Order'. He retired from military service but during WW I he took part in many activities to further the war effort. But one must remember that he was also involved in local affairs- for besides being in



the Insurance business and later Counties' Clerk he found time to serve Cobourg as Secretary of the Hospital Board, as Trustee of the CCI Board on which he was instrumental in getting the new Collegiate in 1901. He served as Elder of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church where he was Trustee, Treasurer and Superintendent of the Sunday School, taking the children across Rice Lake to Jubilee Point for their annual summer picnic. For 28 years he also served a Clerk of Session for the Church. Truly he was a man for all seasons.

In Jan. of 1917 he was gazetted as full Colonel and it was dated back to 1913 when he had retired from Command of 10 Td. Bde. On Dec. 10, 1928 he had been preparing for a session of the Council but on returning to his office after lunch he had a seizure and passed away in the presence of his son Edmund (Ted), his assistant. His funeral on the 12th was noteworthy for the huge number who turned out to pay tribute to him and accompany the military funeral cortege to the cemetery where a firing party from the 22nd Medium Bty., the successor to his beloved CGA Bty., fired three volleys in salute to him as the casket was lowered into the grave. So passed one of our Town's most remarkable citizens. And if you would like to see a memorial to him, look at the triple South window of St. Andrew's Church as it looks out on the King St. where he paraded so often.

His son, Major Edmund L. MacNachtan (Ted), 1888 - 1947, succeeded him for he had been Counties' treasurer and Assistant Clerk since 1923. Ted was a Lieut. in the 10th Bde Ammunition Column. When war broke out he resigned his commission and enlisted in the RCMA where he was made a Gun Sgt. in the 9th Bty. (was he afraid the unit would not be called up or get to the war soon enough?) Anyway he was soon overseas and in France with the first contingent. He took part in the first battle of Ypres as a member of the 4th Bty. (gas attack 22 Apr. 1915). He survived but had to spend some time in hospital in



June. He was commissioned again in June 1916 and sent to 1st Coy. 1st Bty. In 1918 he was transferred as Captain to F. Bty. of the Anti-Aircraft arm of Artillery. An item in the Cobourg World stated that he never had more than five days leave at a stretch. Upon ~~returning~~ <sup>returning</sup> home he was appointed treasurer and Assistant Clerk of the United Counties. In the ensuing years from 1923 on he received much praise for the quality and efficiency of his financial department,

In local affairs he was a member of the Curling Club and the Golf Club and was Director of the Northumberland Fish and Game Association. He became quite ill in 1947, had to be hospitalized and finally passed away on May the 12th. Many were the tributes paid to him from local citizens and members of Counties Council on the occasion of his funeral.

With his passing an era had come to an end.

His grandfather - Counties Clerk	1863 - 1891
His father	" " 1891 - 1928
Himself	" " 1928 - 1947
	" Treas. 1923 - 1928

So ended the regime of the MacNachtans.

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