

Lost airman's

Uncle of Anne Wyminga leaves poignant record behind

By Bob Owen
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It will one day become part of a book, a legacy of the family of Pieter and Anne Wyminga. Right now, it is a poignant and deeply ironic bundle of letters sent by a young man of 18 years to his family in Canada during the tail-end of World War 1.

The fascinating account was found in Tom Martin's locker. He had kept a copy of almost every letter he sent home. Tom was Anne Wyminga's uncle. When Anne's husband Pieter Wyming expressed interest in the historic accounts, they were passed on to the Colborne couple. Glancing through the treasure, it appears all that is missing are the cards and some letters sent to his siblings, and the many photos taken over the year he was away from home.

Pieter hopes to include the contents of the recovered letters in a book he is writing about the family history.

The binder and an accompanying diary are kept in a safety deposit box, a priceless memory of the final year in the young man's life.

The story unfolds

Thomas Cranston Martin was born on August 18, 1899. He died a week before his 19th birthday in a dogfight with five German Fokker fighters over Houlthouster Wood.

Months before Tom enlisted, his father was busy securing a place for him in the Royal Flying Corps. A May 28, 1917 letter by the father asks for an application, stating that Tom, "is very anxious to get his application in so that as soon as he is of age there will be no delay."

The ensuing letter reveals that Tom enlisted as a Second Flight Lieutenant on his 18th birthday.

His first typed message home is dated Aug. 26/17, eight days after he joins up. It conveys a bright upbeat spirit and a sense of duty to family and country that continues throughout his correspondence to a copy of a letter to his mom, written in France on July 31, 1918. The final letters written in the early days of August, perhaps not yet filed with the others when he died, are gone forever.

In that final message, he promises to critique a Saturday Evening Post article his father

had sent to him, and worries over an air force friend he hasn't heard from in nearly a month. He also downplays a crash landing he incurred days before, and considers whether to go to Paris or London on his first holiday.

Throughout his letters, there is the constant excitement and eagerness to get on with the "work" ahead.

Each letter is headed with his location, and is a veritable map of training facilities in North America and Great Britain.

His first is from nearby Long Beach, then Deseronto, followed by Canadian camps in Mohawk, and Borden. Then he's off to Texas to Benbrook, Talliaferro, and Hicks; there's even a letter written in his berth on the S. S. Tunisian, as it arrives in Europe.

His first letter to his dad on August 26, 1917, relates his duties serving on the mess line, and his adjustments to the coarse language used by his non-commissioned officers. He notes in closing, "We do not pay for our uniforms straight off but it comes out of our pay."

On the same day, he writes to his mother, listing the issue he receives from the quartermaster.

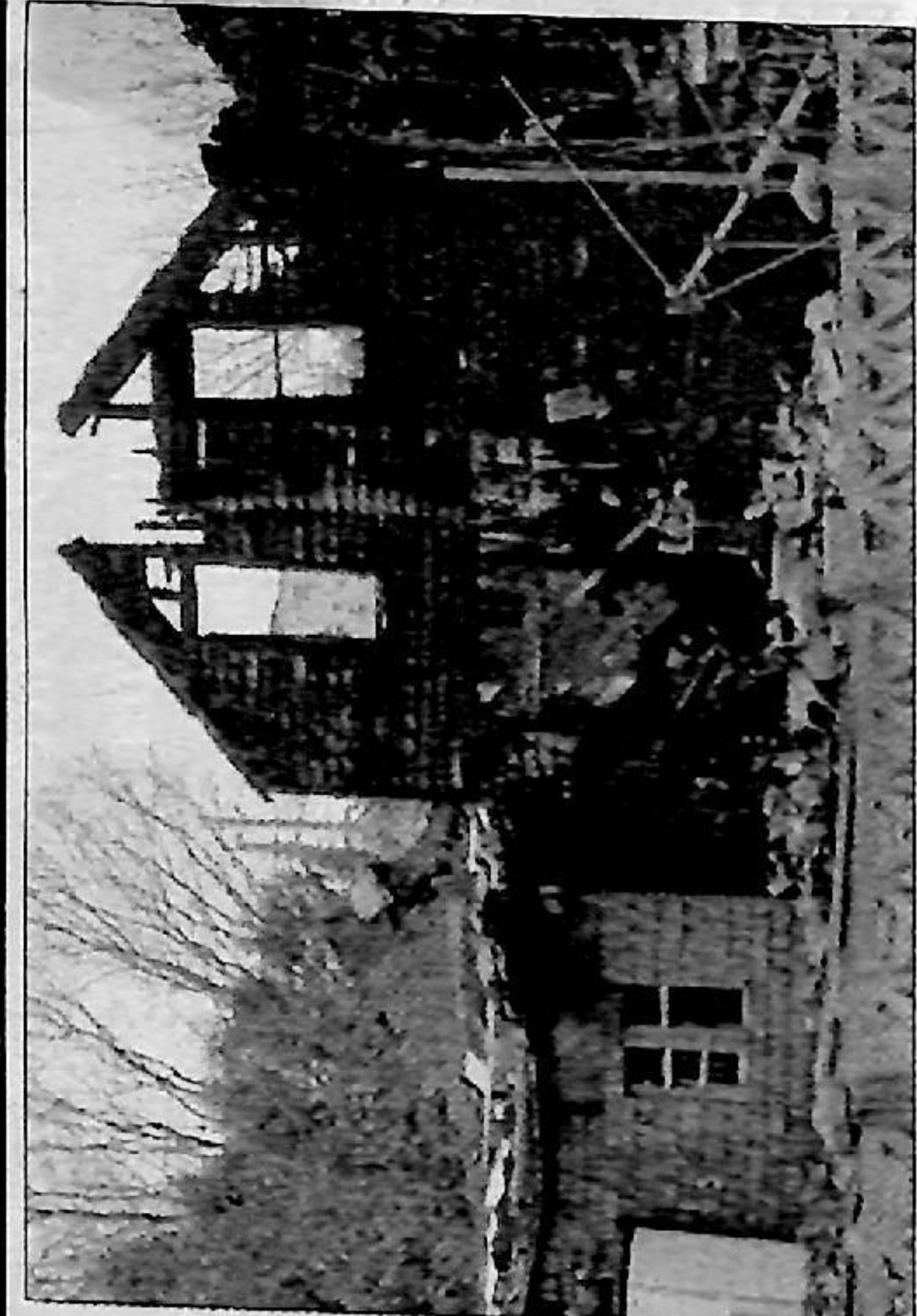
CARDS OF THANKS

Mitchell, Howard Robert

We would like to extend our thanks to family, friends, neighbours and the whole community for the outpouring of love and support at our time of loss. Much appreciated were all the generous donations in Howard's memory, cards, calls, floral arrangements and food. Special thanks to Rev. Lloyd Paul and Rev. John Saynor for their kind words, Staff at Wasas Funeral Home for all their care and concern, the Warkworth Fire Department for all their efforts and professionalism, Gordon Allanson for taking charge of the school bus line, Philip O'Grady for caring for the cattle, St. Paul's UCW for the wonderful lunch and St. Paul's Choir for their gift of music, and to the parents who brought their children to say goodbye to a wonderful bus driver. We love you all. God Bless. Mary, Rob, Mark Mitchell and Families.

CELEBRATIONS

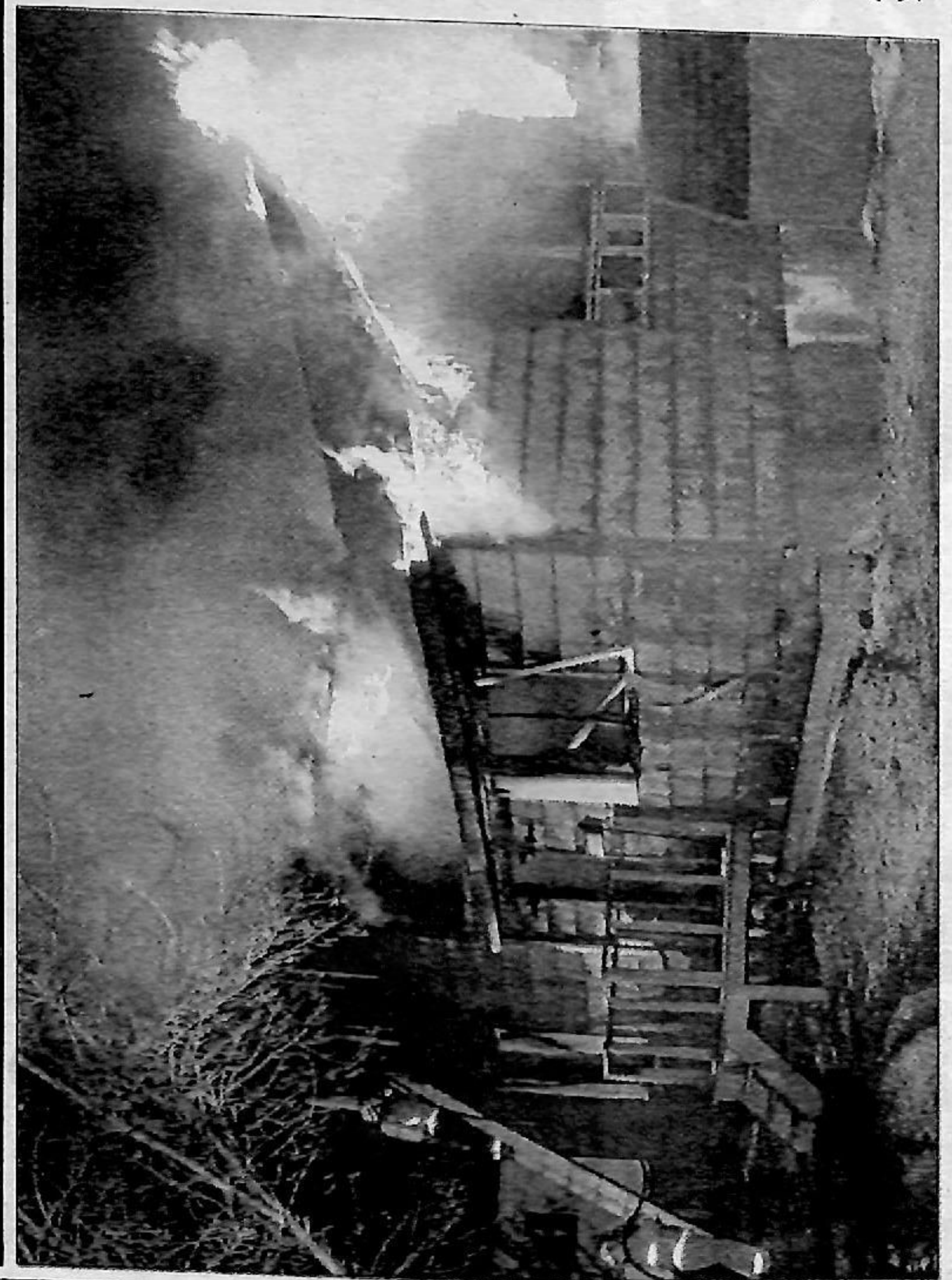
FIRE DESTROYS COLBORNE HOME



PHOTOS BY PETE FISHER

Left: Colborne/Cramahe firefighters worked throughout the night to extinguish a house fire that was reported around 1 a.m. Wednesday, March 23. When firefighters arrived at the Church Street West home the rear was engulfed in flames, which soon spread throughout the dwelling.

PHOTO BY ALWYN HORSBROFT
Above: The home was destroyed. The cause of the blaze is not yet known.



COLBORNE CHRONICLE MAR 31/05